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Dora Yui Kei Lo
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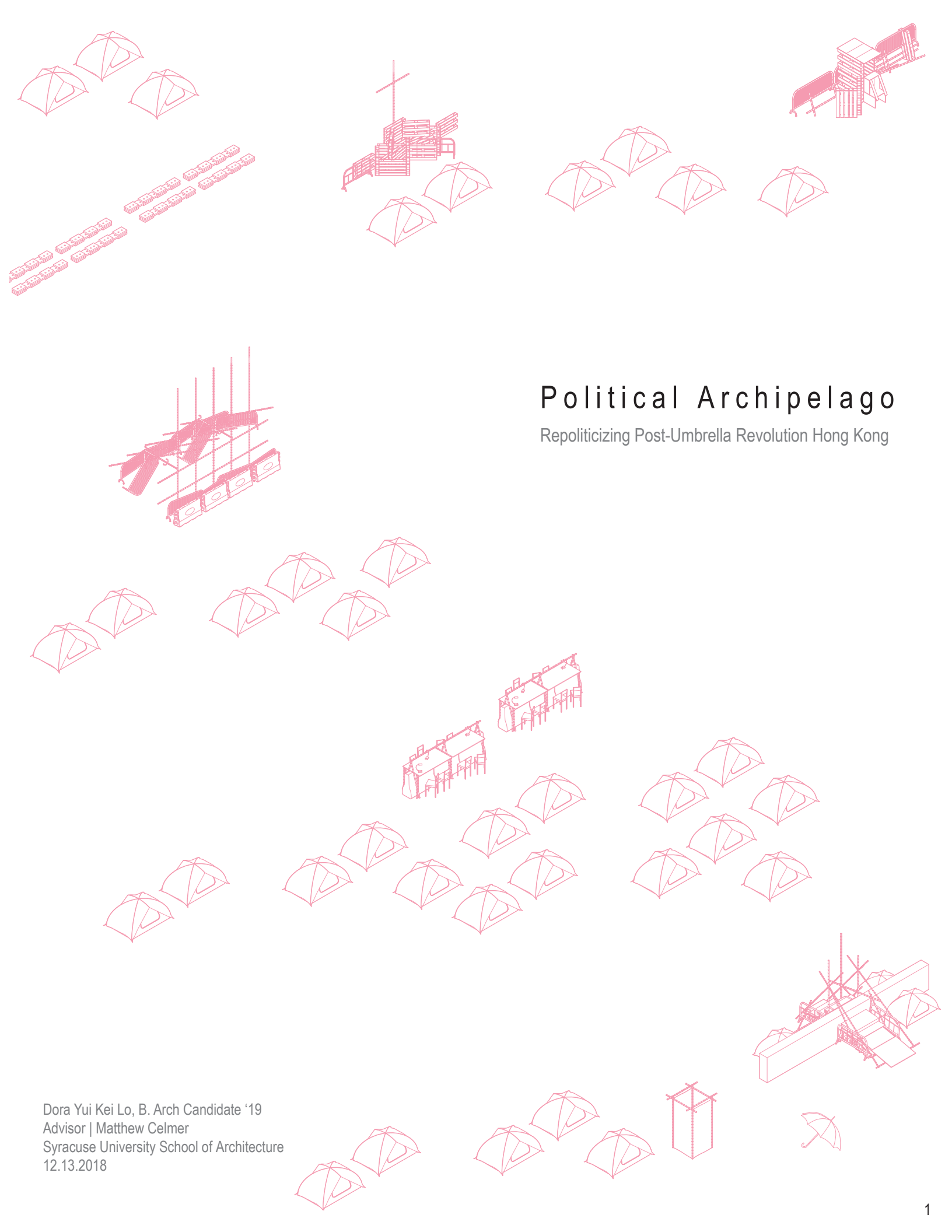


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Political Archipelago

Repoliticizing Post-Umbrella Revolution Hong Kong

Dora Yui Kei Lo, B. Arch Candidate '19
Advisor | Matthew Celmer
Syracuse University School of Architecture
12.13.2018

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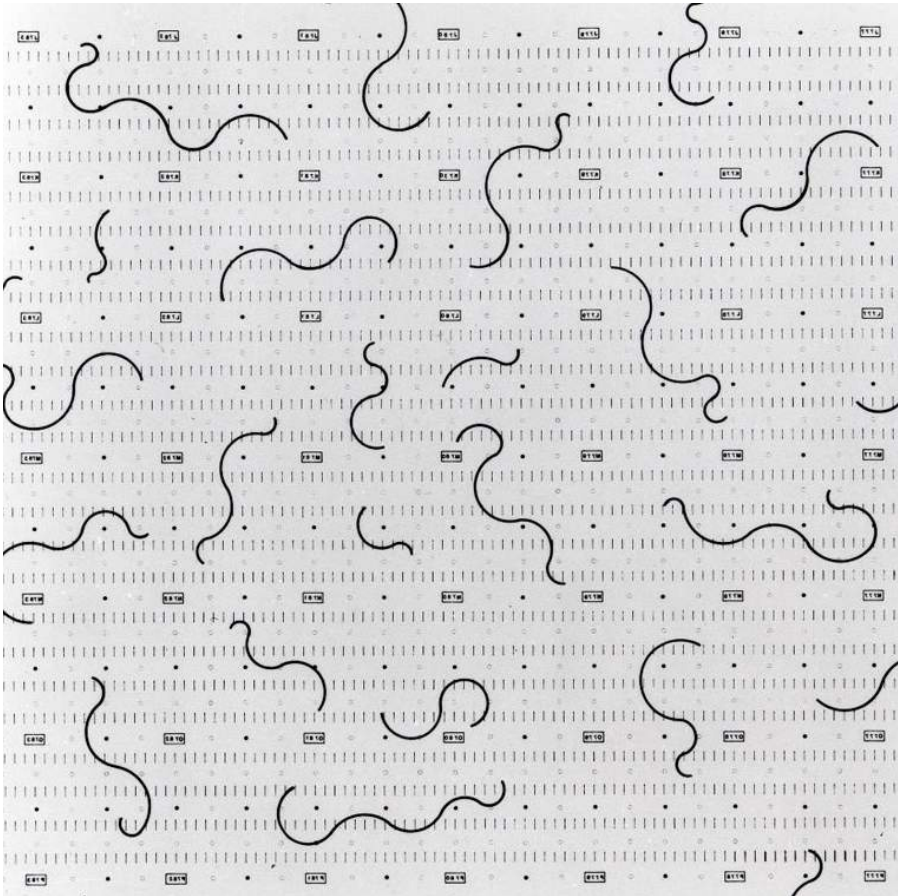
Introduction

Background

From the Greek *polis* to the later Roman *civitas*, the problem of **democratic political public realm** lies in its negotiation with external forces. These external forces include but are not limited to *urbs* (physical foundation of the city) and *nomos /lex* (laws).¹ Starting in the 19th century, industrialization began to rapidly corrode the democratic political realm. Capitalism and urbanization brought in insatiable production goals and endless expansion of the city. They then became the dominating forces shaping not only the political public sphere but also the entire city:

“...economy transcend the boundaries between public space and private space,... as the principal mode of governance for the whole of urbanity. The essence of urbanization is therefore the destruction of any limit, boundary... [that is not] the infinite, compulsive repetition of its own...”²

Nowadays, **the democratic political public realm further degrades and dematerializes**. Governments and corporations have depoliticalised and privatized public space; they are now just empty open space that feed on nostalgia of its past. The residues of the public realm has retreated inwards so much that it detaches itself away from the city. The public realm will eventually disconnect from the real and exist only in the virtual space of the Internet.



Archizoom Associati, *No-Stop City*, 1969.

1. Aureli, Pier Vittorio. *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011.

2. Ibid, Aureli.

Thesis Statement

Background

This project aims to **re-politicize the public sphere of post-Umbrella Revolution Hong Kong**. Umbrella Revolution was one of the latest defining events of democratic struggles in Hong Kong. Like other protests, civil disobedience and revolutions, Umbrella Revolution was more than just “organized public dissents”; it was **an experiment of an alternative democratic sphere for agonistic struggles**. The occupation temporarily **altered, reoriented, disoriented or debilitated the existing boundaries and thresholds in the city**; it resisted the logic of the city to create a space of exception. However, these temporary alterations **did not leave significant permanent imprints to the city**. At the end, these temporary traces of an alternative democratic sphere are turned into the banal background of the everyday life. The city once again falls back into the orchestrated amnesia as part of their capitalist fantasy.

Project Proposal

This project proposes a political archipelago that confronts the tides of the governmental and capitalistic authority of the city. Through this continuous **making/unmaking process upon the traces of political sites**, these “islands” are the **anchor points** for future force of urban resistance to the city.



Xaume Olleros, A Pro-democracy demonstrator gestures after police fired tear gas toward protesters, 2014.

Political History of China and Hong Kong

Hong Kong was colonized by British Empire under the *Convention of Peking* after China’s defeat in the Opium War in 1860. It has undergone drastic cultural, social and political changes under the rule of the British Empire for almost a century. Hong Kong became a separate entity from China; it is the fusion of the East and West.

Hong Kong, however, was not unaffected by the political turmoil in Mainland China. The Cultural Revolution (1966-67) and Tiananmen Massacre (1989) has thousands of refugees from Mainland to Hong Kong. The Tiananmen Massacre sparked one of the first democratic campaigns in Hong Kong that set the foundation for future democratic development.

Hong Kong was returned to China on 1st July 1997. The Chinese Central Government and United Kingdom signed the *Sino-British Declaration*, which promise the citizens of Hong Kong a high level of autonomy for 50 years. Under the *One Country, Two Systems*, Hong Kong and China are two separate jurisdictions. Hong Kong can inherit the former British governmental system with separation of powers: Executive, Legislative and Judiciary. The Executive includes the Chief Executive (5-year term) and the Executive Council. Legislative includes the 70-member Legislative Council. Judiciary includes the Court of Final Appeal and other lower courts. However, the Chief Executive has to be appointed by the Central Government, and the Hong Kong Garrison is still in charge by the Central Military Commission from the Chinese Central Government.

Nowadays, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong is not selected based on democratic procedures according to International standards. The Chief Executive is elected by a small group of voters, who are then elected by a selected group of professionals. This procedure is against Article 45 in *Basic Law of Hong Kong*, which was part of the agreement between United Kingdom and Chinese Central Government. According to Article 45 in *Basic Law*,

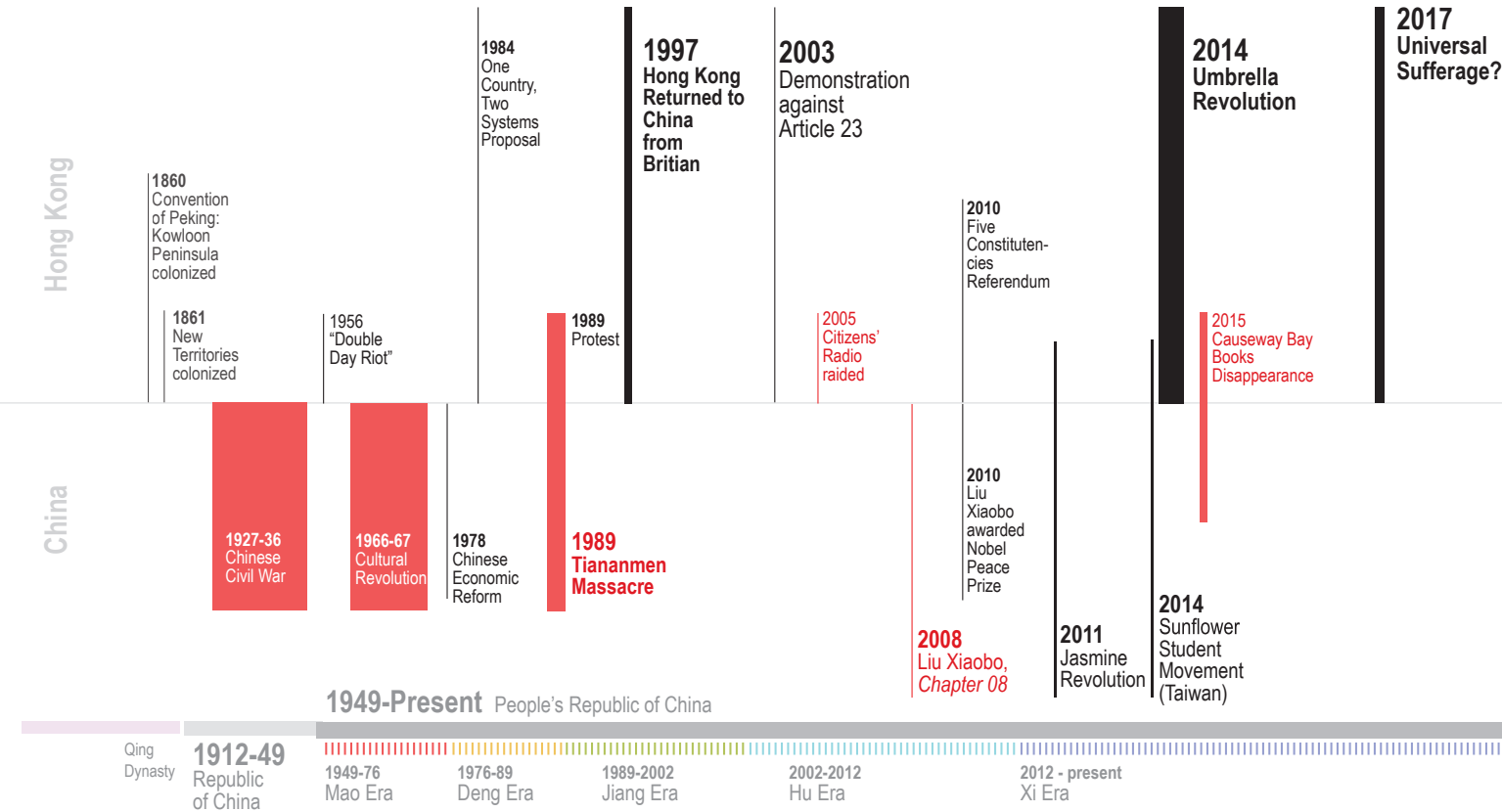
“The ultimate aim is the selection of the Chief Executive by universal suffrage...in accordance with democratic procedures.”

Universal suffrage, which is the right to vote of all citizens, has become one of the major demands from the Hong Kong citizens. The Central Government’s refrain from a democratic election has sparked public outcry from the society. The Hong Kong Government has also attempted to reinforce measures to restrict dissents from the society. One of the key events was the attempt to establish Article 23 of Basic Law in 2003, which could potentially give unlimited power and censorship to the government:

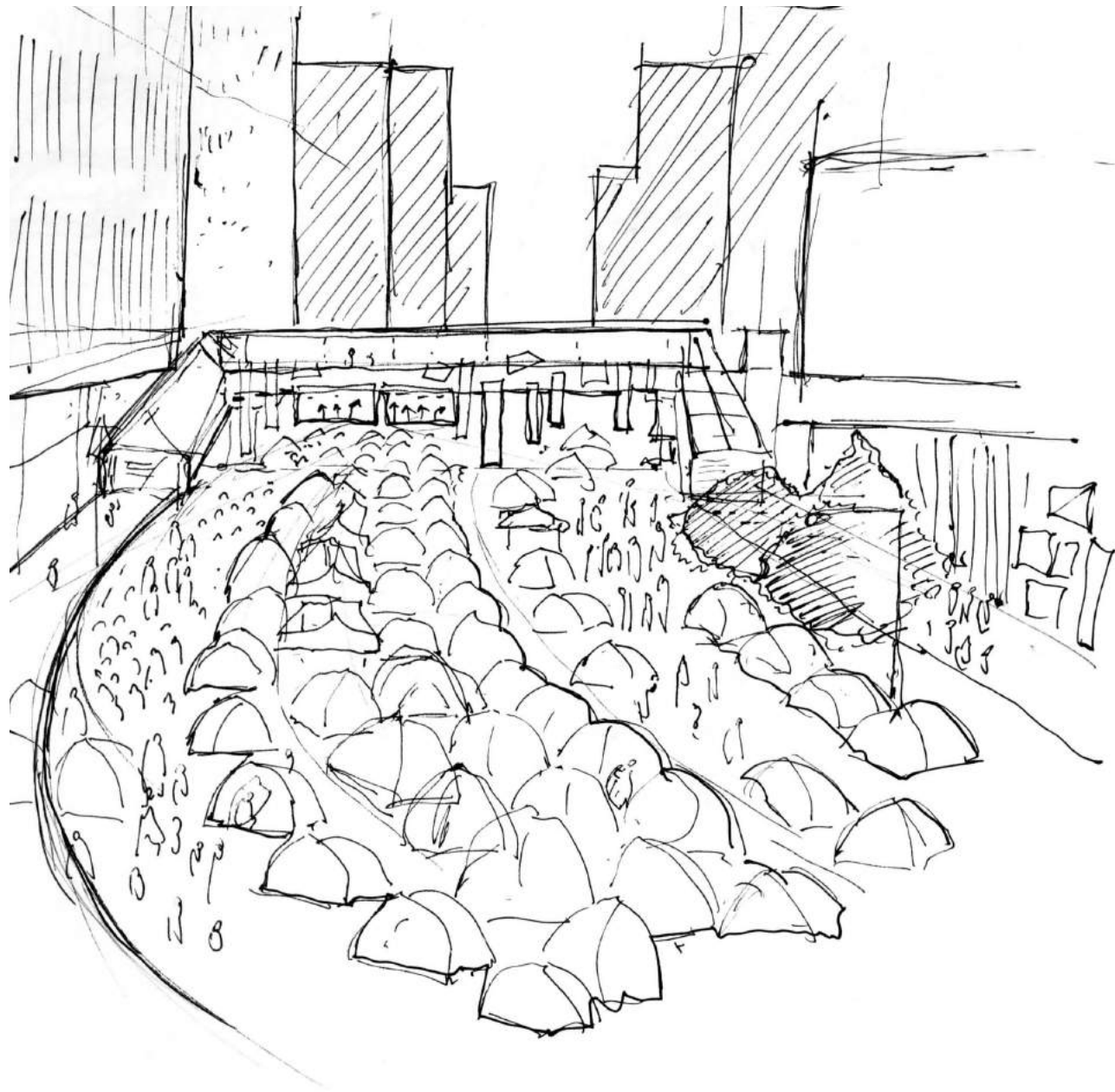
“shall enact laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, session, sedition, subversion against the Central Government,..., to prohibit foreign political organization or bodies from conducting political activities in the Region,... establishing ties with foreign political organization or bodies.”

The attempt to legislate the Article 23 has sparked massive demonstration on 1st July that paralyzed the heart of the city. The political demonstration later evolved into an annual parade that hundreds and thousands participate.

As the end of the 50-year of high autonomy is looming, the Chinese Central Government tightens its grip on its subjects and Hong Kong Government. The major political events have projected possible assimilation of Hong Kong into “another Chinese city” in less than 50 years. The only way that Hong Kong citizens can safeguard their human rights is to have a government that is representative of their political interest. Umbrella Revolution in 2014 was the latest political event in Hong Kong in response to the denial of universal suffrage in 2017.



Timeline of major political events in the contemporary history of China and Hong Kong.



Sketch of Admiralty Occupy Zone

2

Umbrella Revolution

a case study

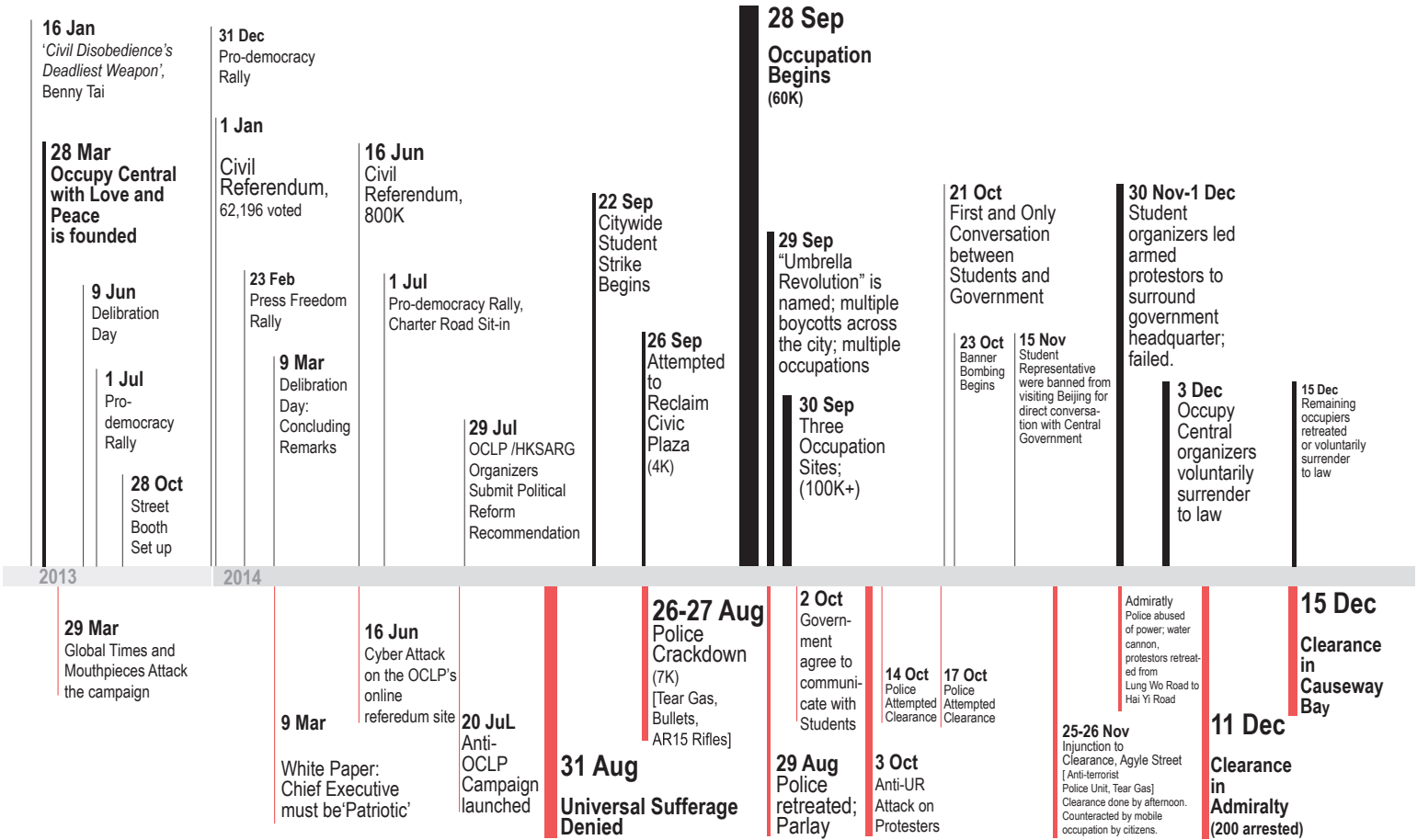
What is Umbrella Revolution?

Umbrella Revolution is an act of civil disobedience that took place in Hong Kong in 2014. It was a 3-month occupation started outside of Central Government Complex, which is the Hong Kong Government headquarter. The occupation was a final act after a series of attempts to demand government for universal suffrage in 2017.

The movement started to take into shape on 16 January 2013. Dr. Benny Tai, one of the three leaders of Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP), proposed civil disobedience as a new form of protest to pressure the government to introduce universal suffrage in Hong Kong. Dr. Benny Tai, Reverend Chu Yiu-ming and Chan Kin-man founded Occupy Central with Love Peace on 28 March 2013. The organization proposed to peacefully occupy the main financial districts in Hong Kong if the government does not conform the election to democratic procedures of international standard. OCLP organized many forums and rallies to promote their value to the public.

The critical moment of the movement was on 31 August 2014, the day when the Chinese Central Government denied universal suffrage of Chief Executive in 2017. The decision sparked outrage in the city. Student-led political organizations, which were independent of OCLP, started citywide student strike. They also started occupying the plaza outside of government headquarters on 26 September 2014. The police started violent crackdown with tear gas and rubber bullets on the peaceful occupants on 26 and 27 September. The police was even armed with AR15 rifles, which stirred up the horrific memories of the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989 of many. The police violence angered and motivated even more citizens to participate in the occupation. In view of the situation, OCLP announced to start the occupation early on 28th September. The movement was also named Umbrella Revolution when a photograph of a protestor defending himself against tear gas with an umbrella was published on the cover of TIME Magazine.

The movement continued to spread from Admiralty, where the government headquarters is located, to other parts of the city. The other two locations are Mongkok and Causeway Bay. At the peak of occupation, there were more than 100,000 occupants. Umbrella Revolution pressured conversation between the government officials and the occupants, but with no success. The occupation lasted for months and the protestors felt fertile to sustain the occupation. It ends when the occupied site was cleared and many were voluntarily and involuntarily arrested in mid December 2014. The streets once again returned to the daily hustle and bustle.



Timeline of Umbrella Revolution

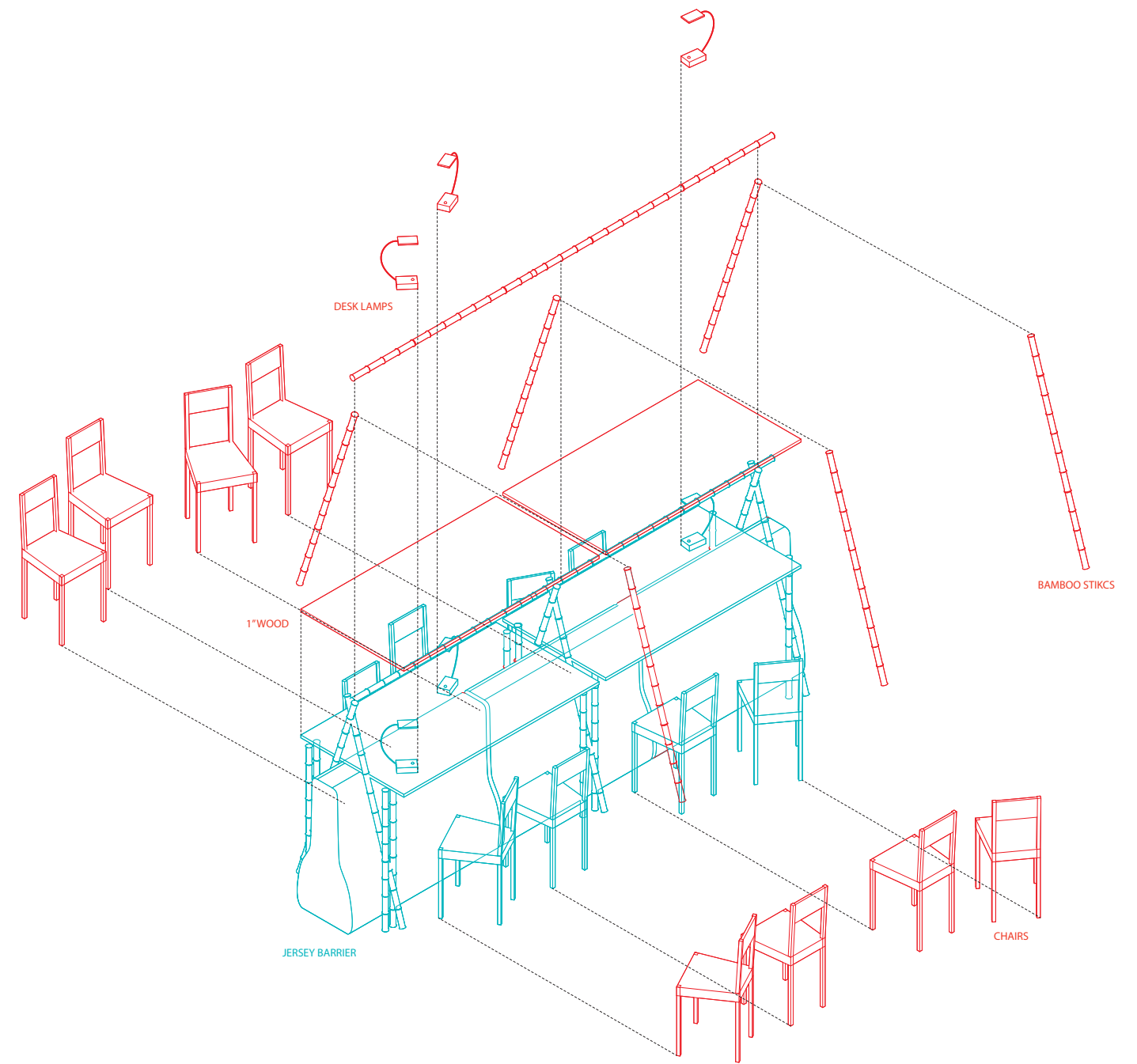
Temporary Protest Structures

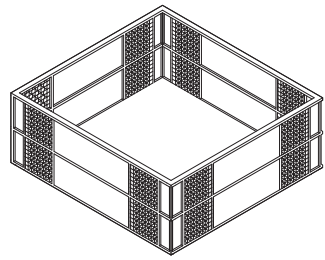
This project started by looking into Umbrella Revolution as a case study. The occupation has altered many aspects of the city temporarily: crossings, traffic pattern, landmark, circulation, programs, and many more. These alternations are however temporary; they do not tend to leave permanent imprints onto the existing city. The government has cleared out all the remaining structures, posters or protestors that remained on site.

If the umbrella revolution cannot leave permanent impact onto the city, what can be the progressive tool for future force of urban resistance in the city?

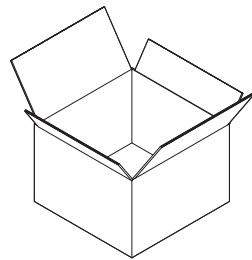
The project further investigates the temporary protest structures and their significance in the movement. By documenting and cataloging these structures and components, the project reveals how they repurposed the infrastructure in public space.

These structures are also constantly assembled and disassembled, put together and taken apart. The reasons are simple: their user needs fluctuates by the number of occupants everyday, and police and other anti-occupation protestors constantly remove them. The act of construction is therefore significant for the occupants. It is an act of resisting the spatial logic of the city. It is an experiment of an alternative democratic society in the center of this endless urbanity created by the governmental and capitalist authority.

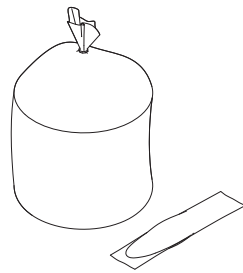




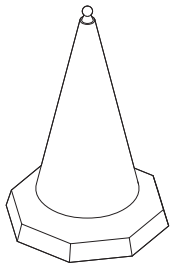
PLASTIC FRUIT CART



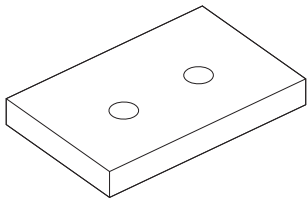
CARDBOARD BOX



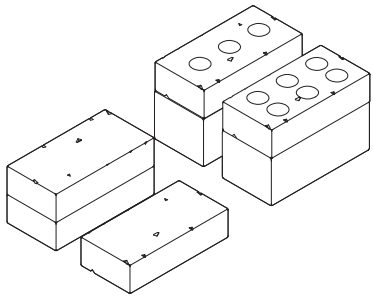
SAND BAGS



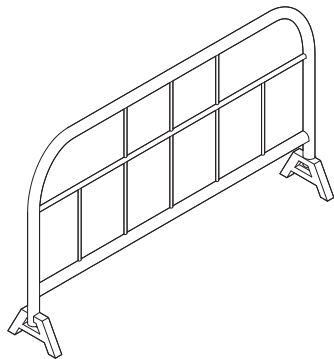
TRAFFIC CONE



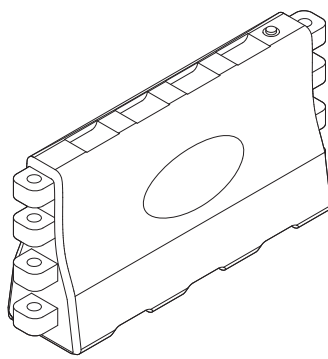
GRATE



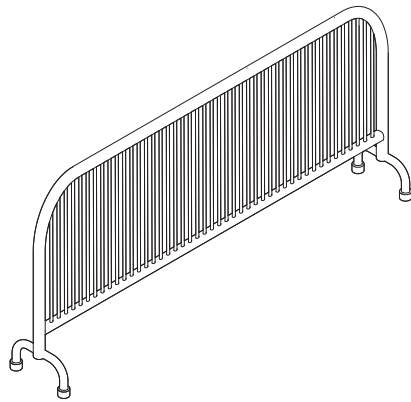
BRICKS



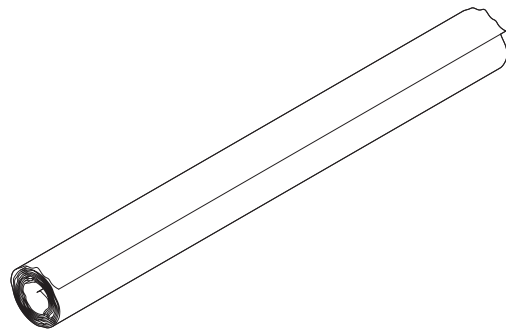
CONSTRUCTION FENCE



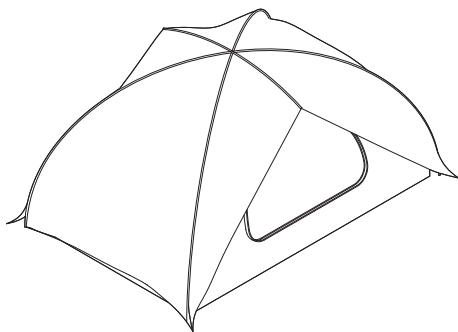
WATER-FILLED BARRIER



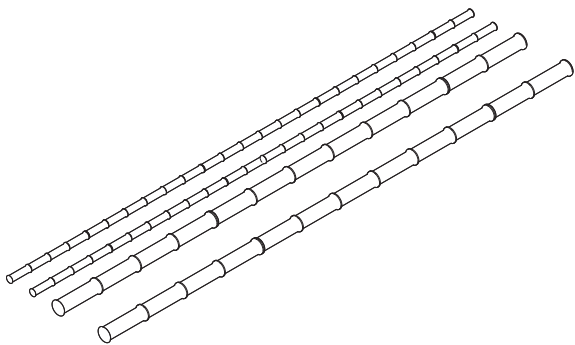
POLICE SECURITY FENCE



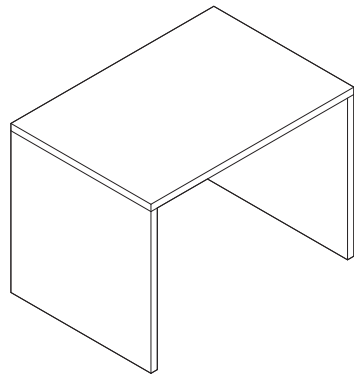
CANVAS



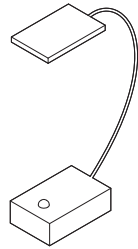
TENT



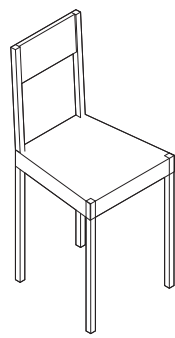
BAMBOO



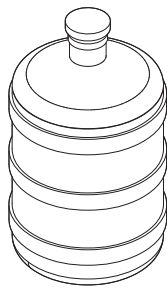
TABLE



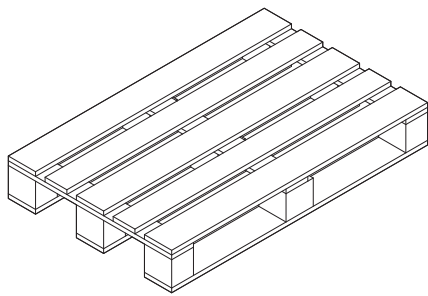
DESK LAMP



CHAIR



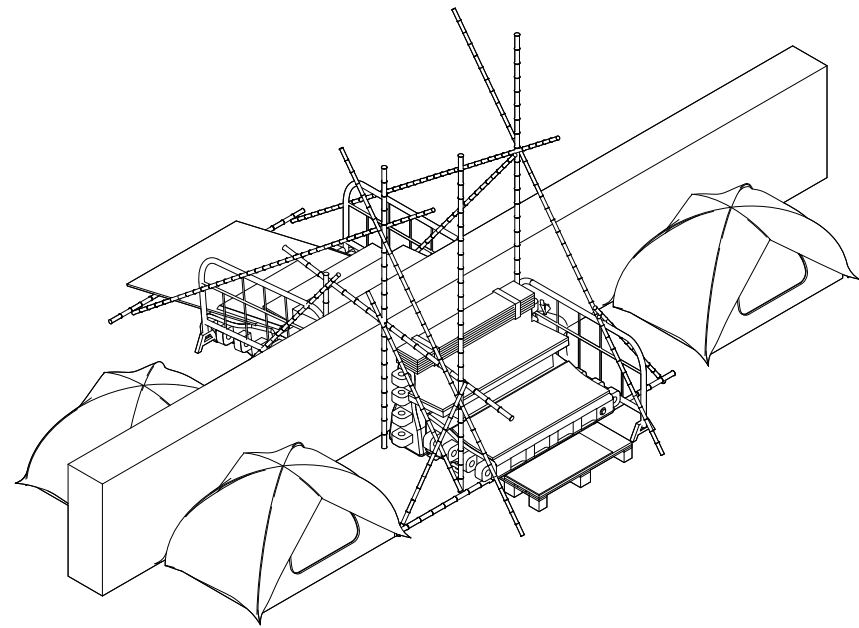
OFFICE WATER TANK



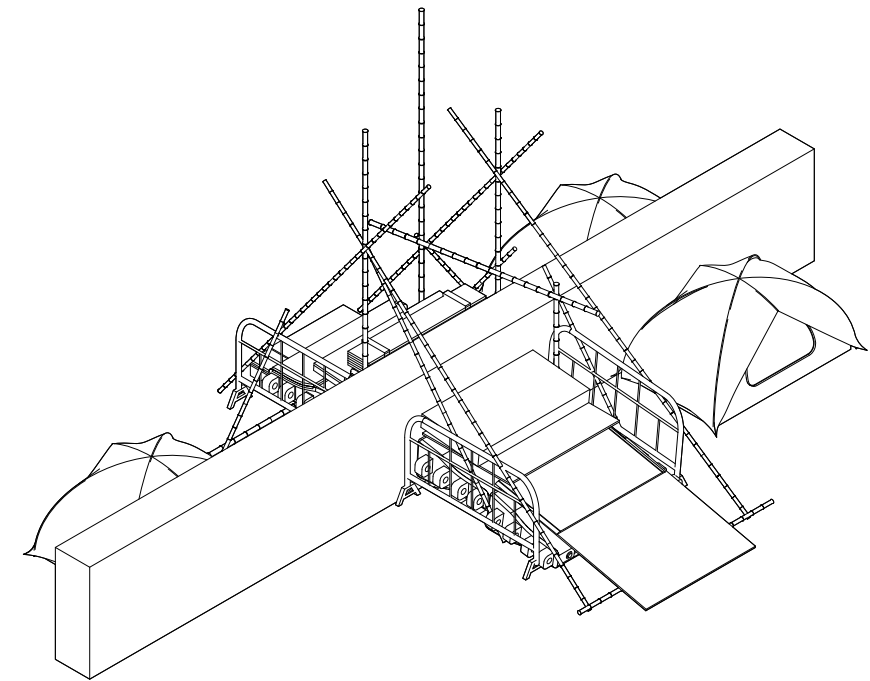
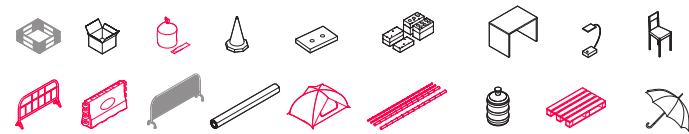
WOODEN PALLET



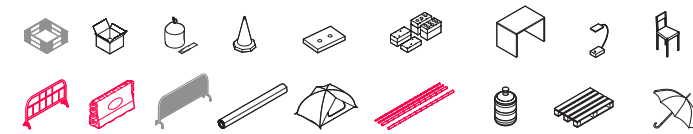
UMBRELLA

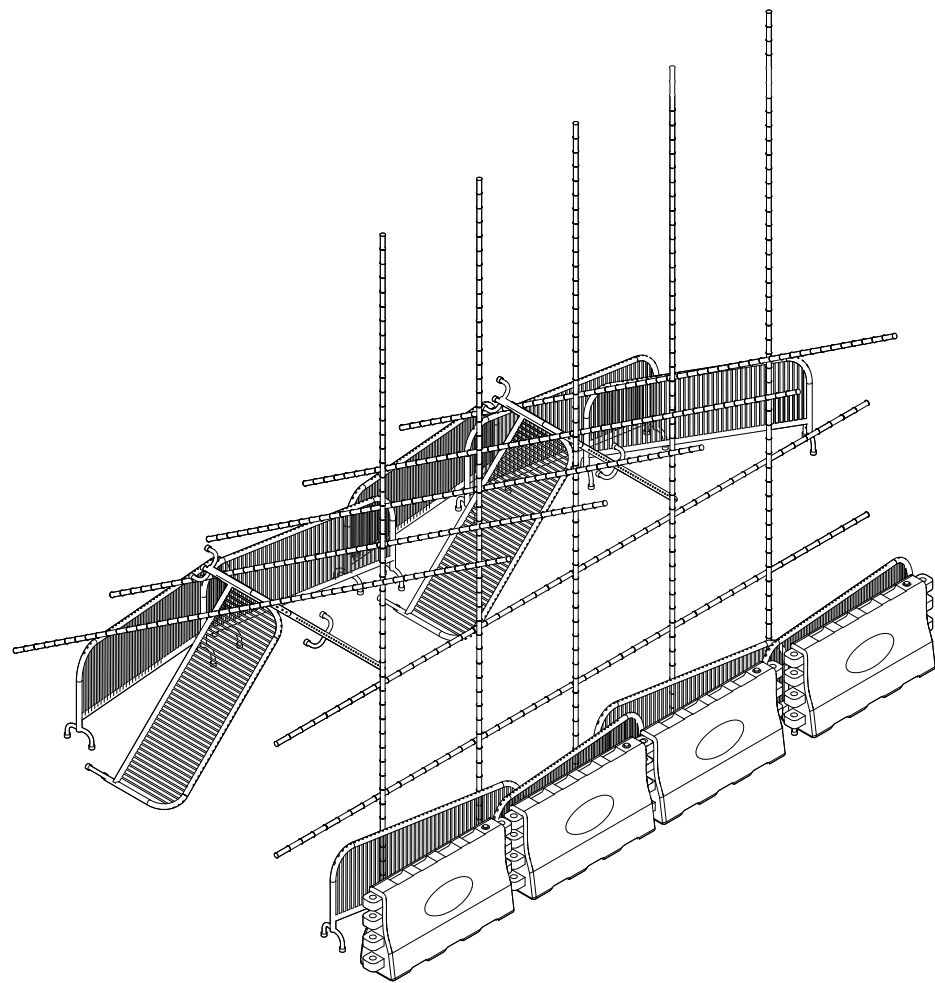


BRIDGE TYPE I

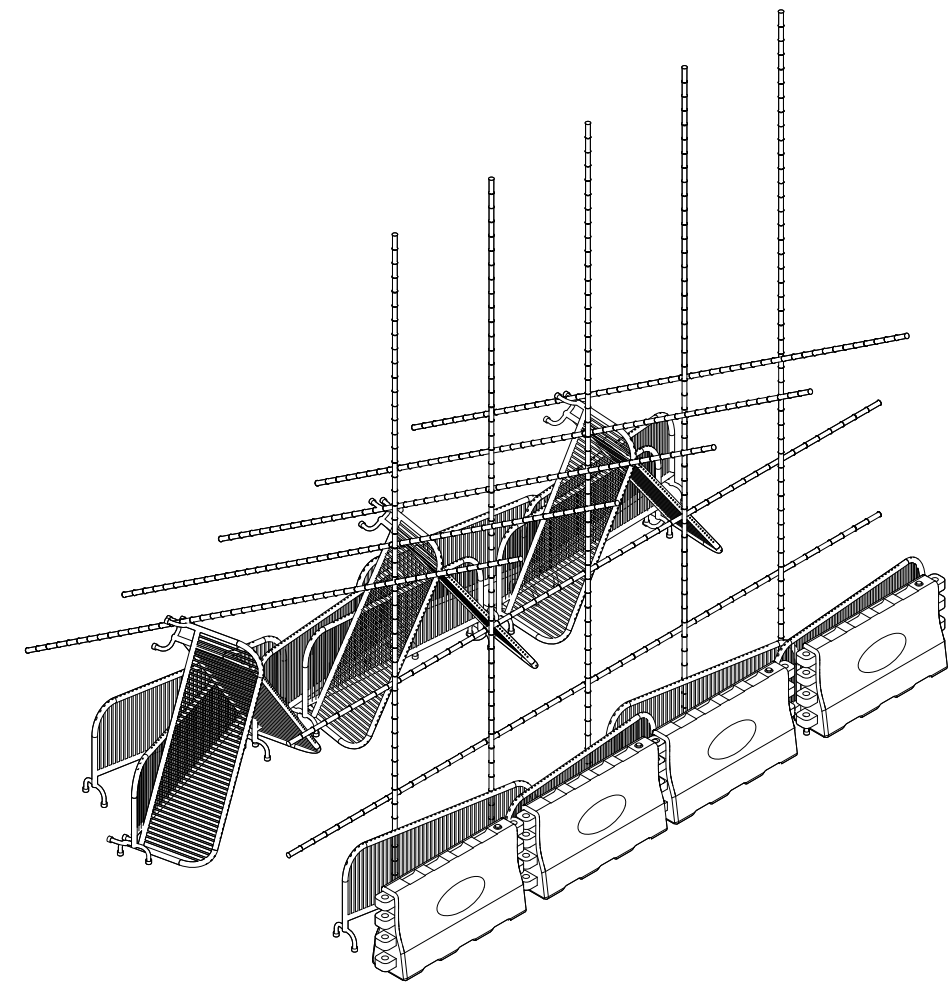
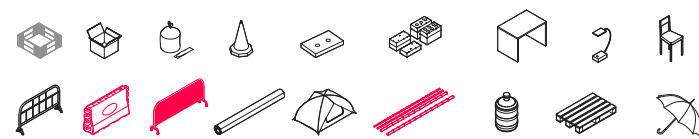


BRIDGE TYPE II

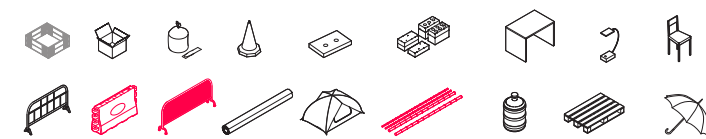


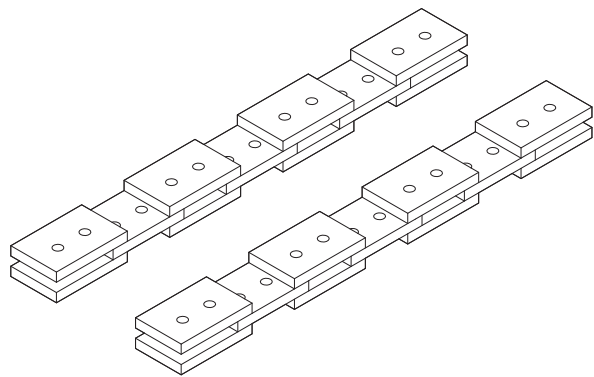


BARRICADE TYPE I

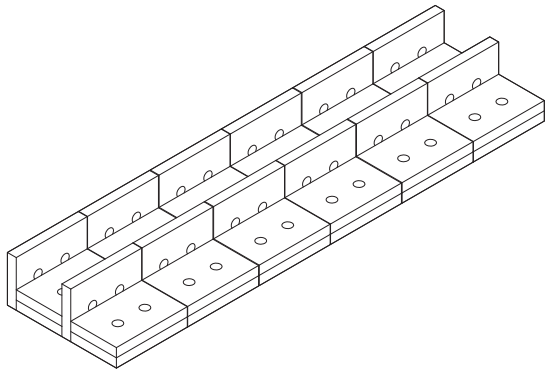


BARRICADE TYPE II

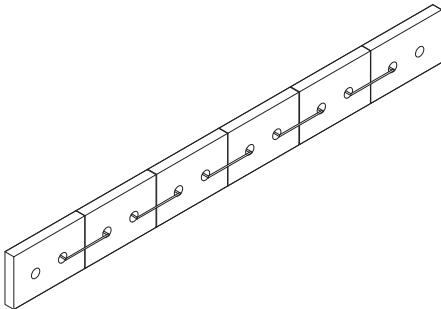




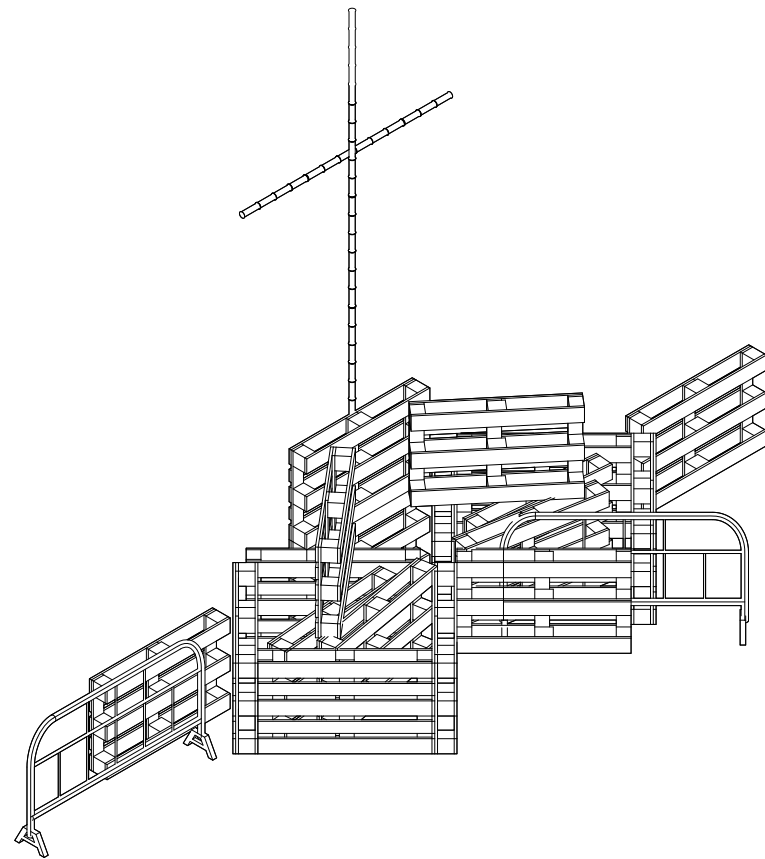
ROAD BLOCK TYPE I



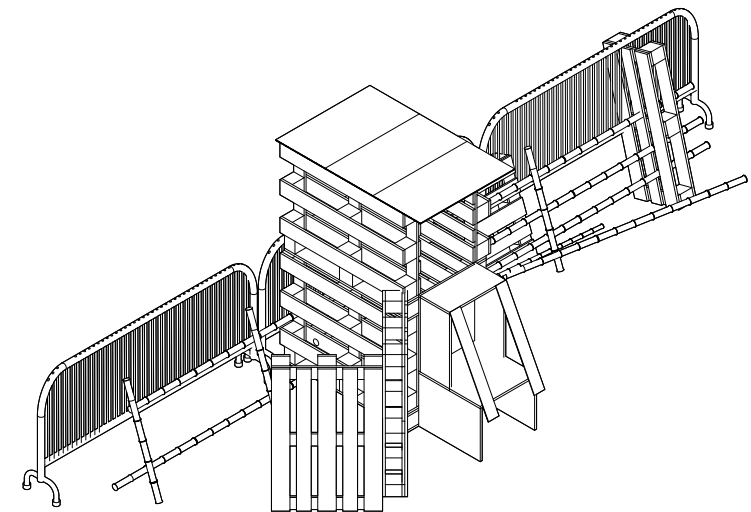
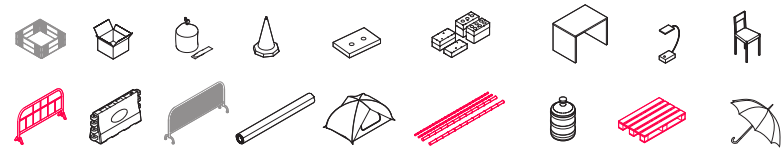
ROAD BLOCK TYPE II



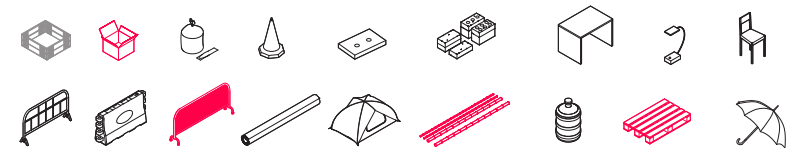
ROAD BLOCK TYPE III

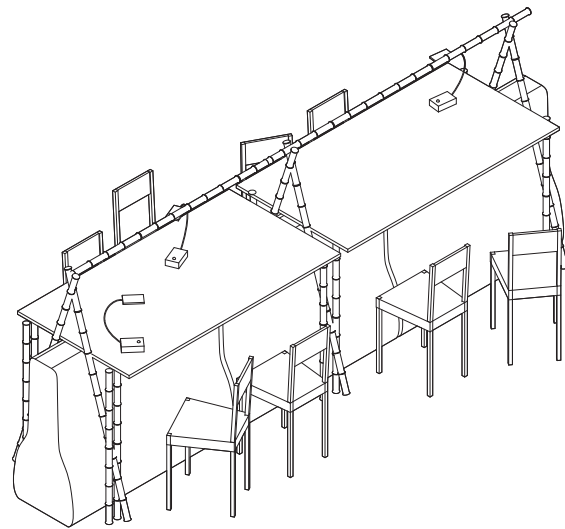


CHAPEL

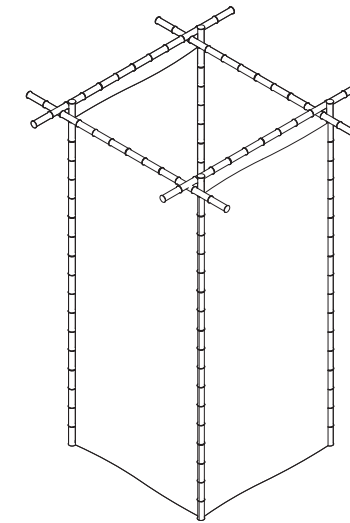
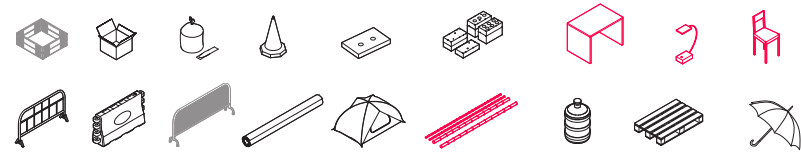


TEMPLE

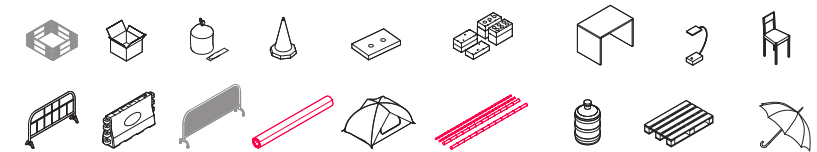


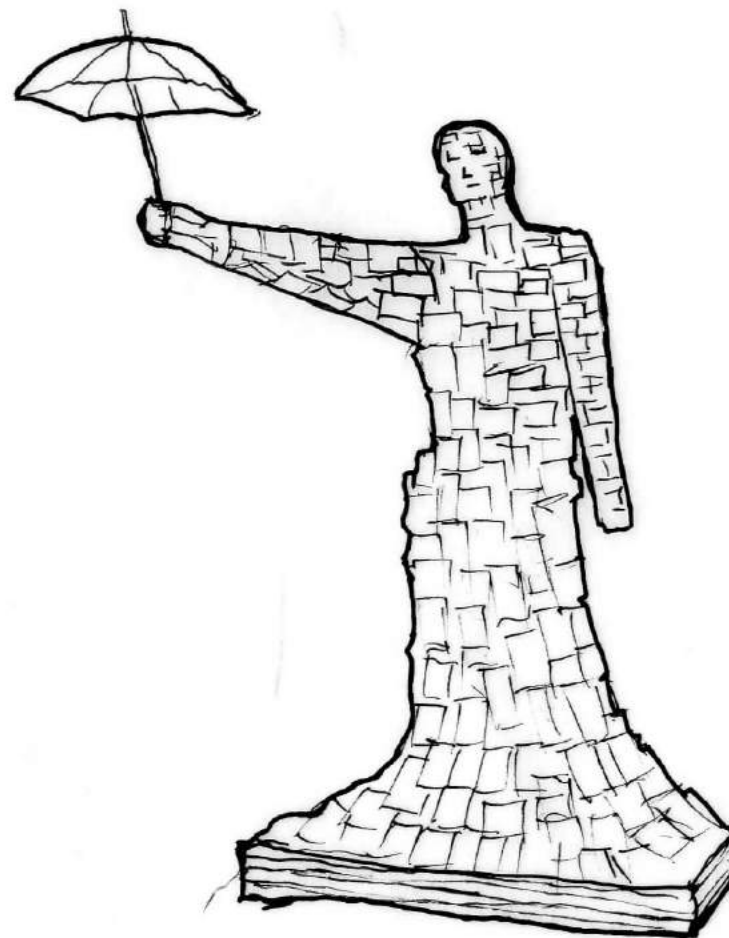


STUDY AREA

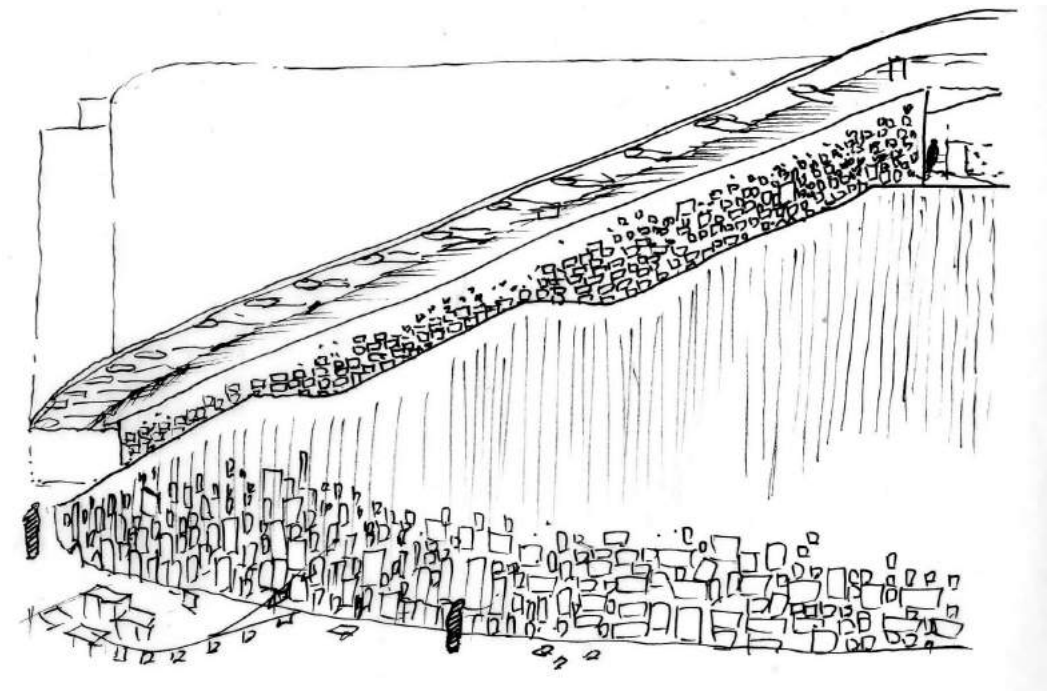


HEAD-WASHING BOOTH

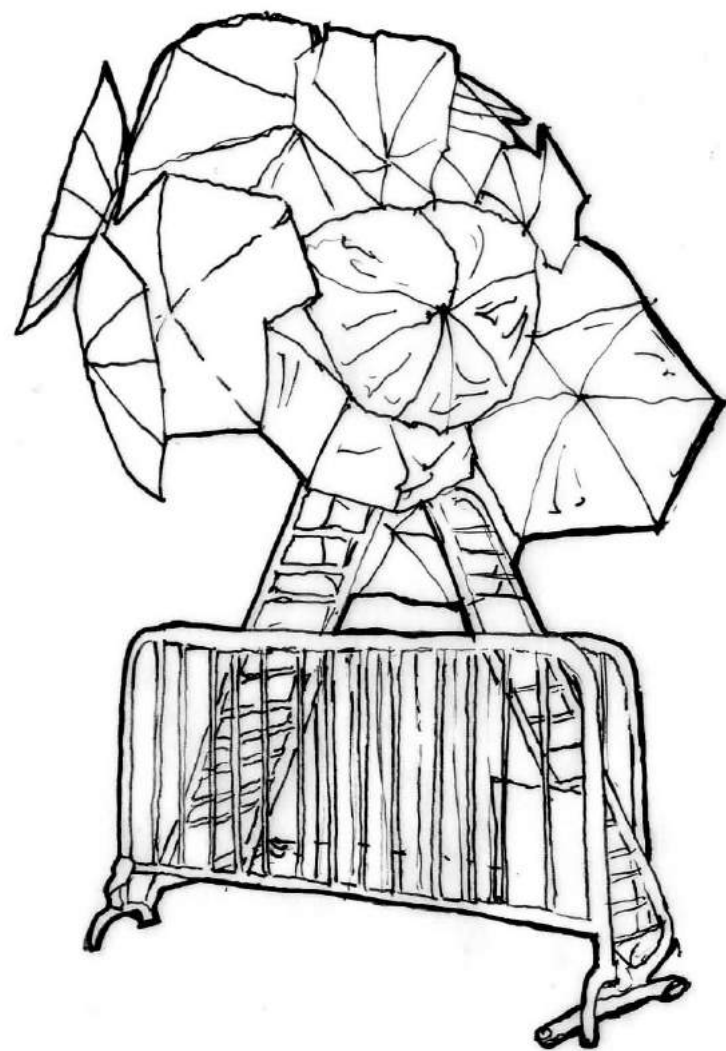




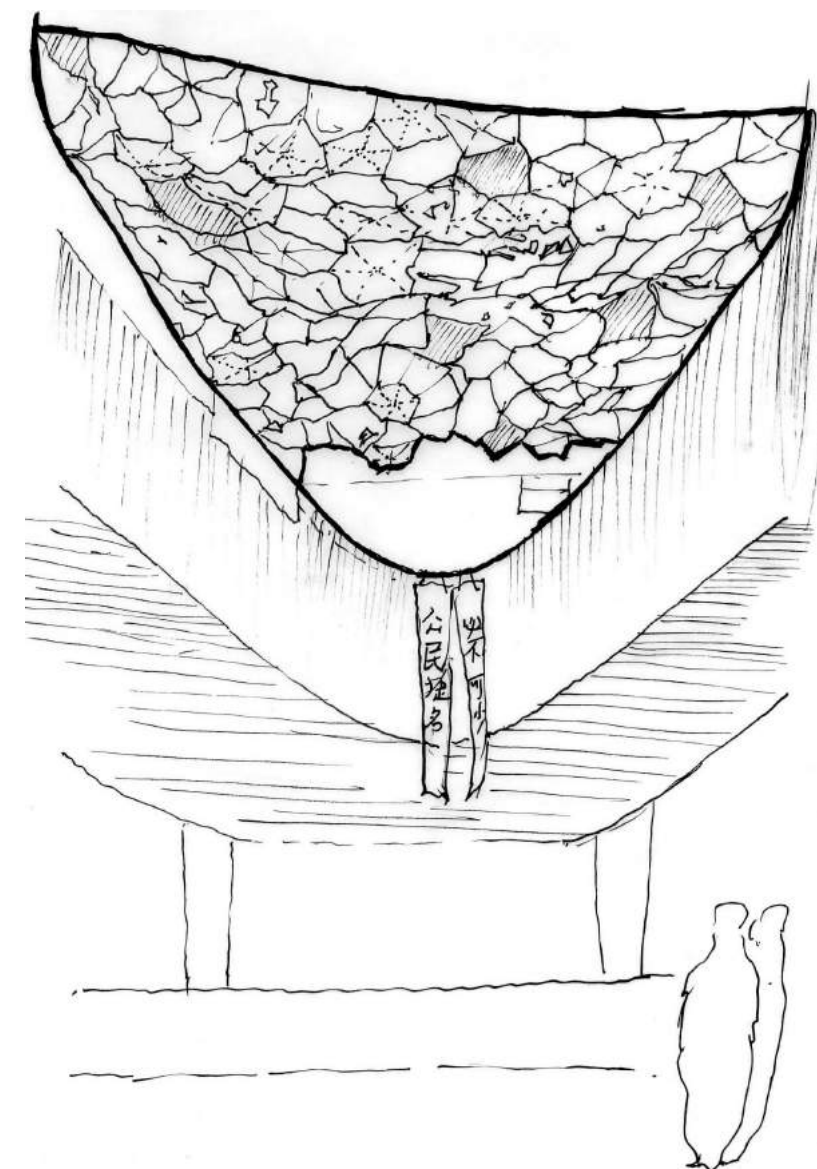
Public Art : Umbrella Man



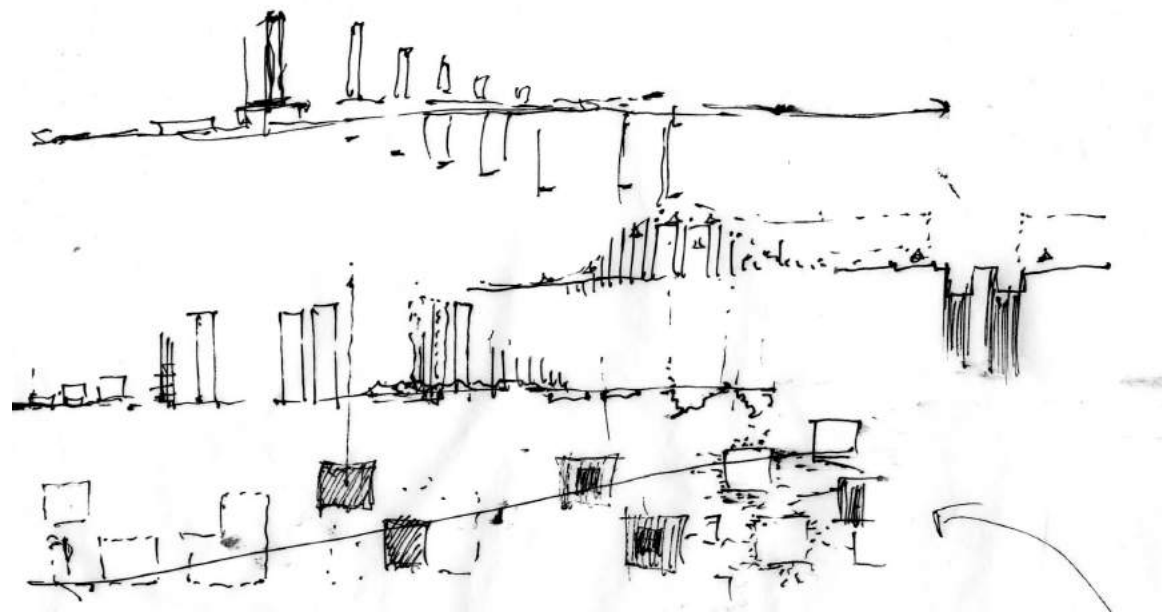
Public Art : Lennon Wall



Public Art : Umbrella Stand
32

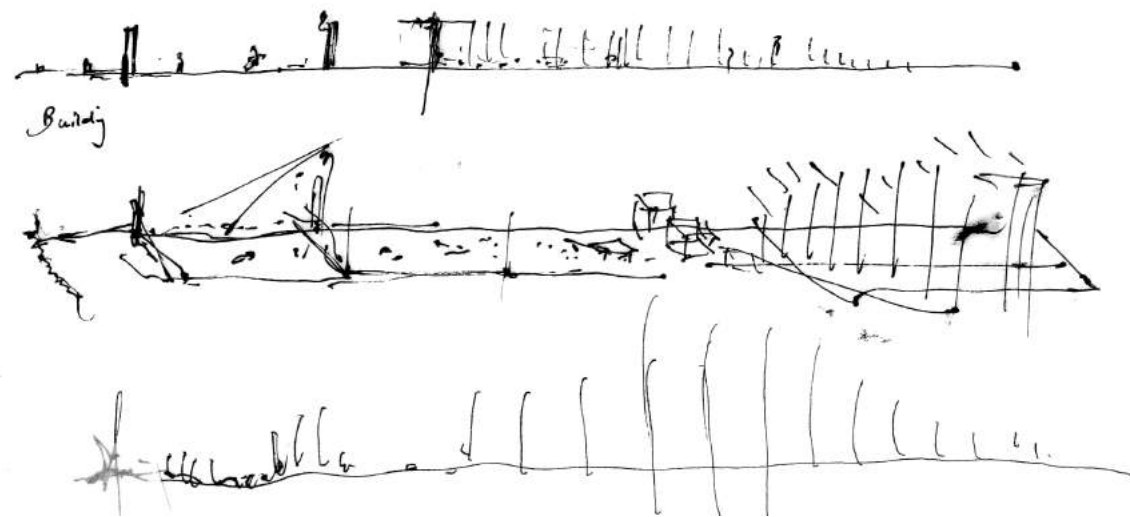


Public Art : Hundred Umbrellas
33



3

Operations of Traces



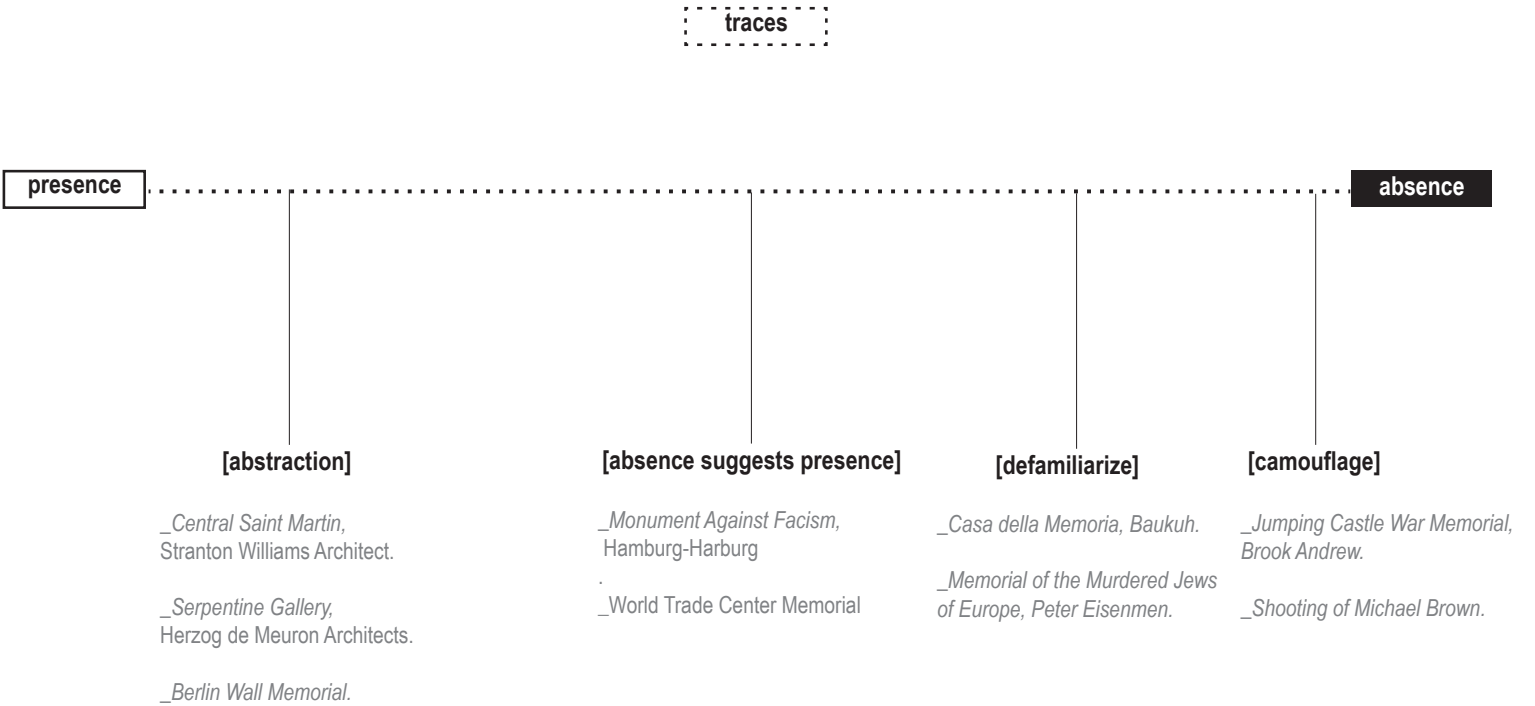
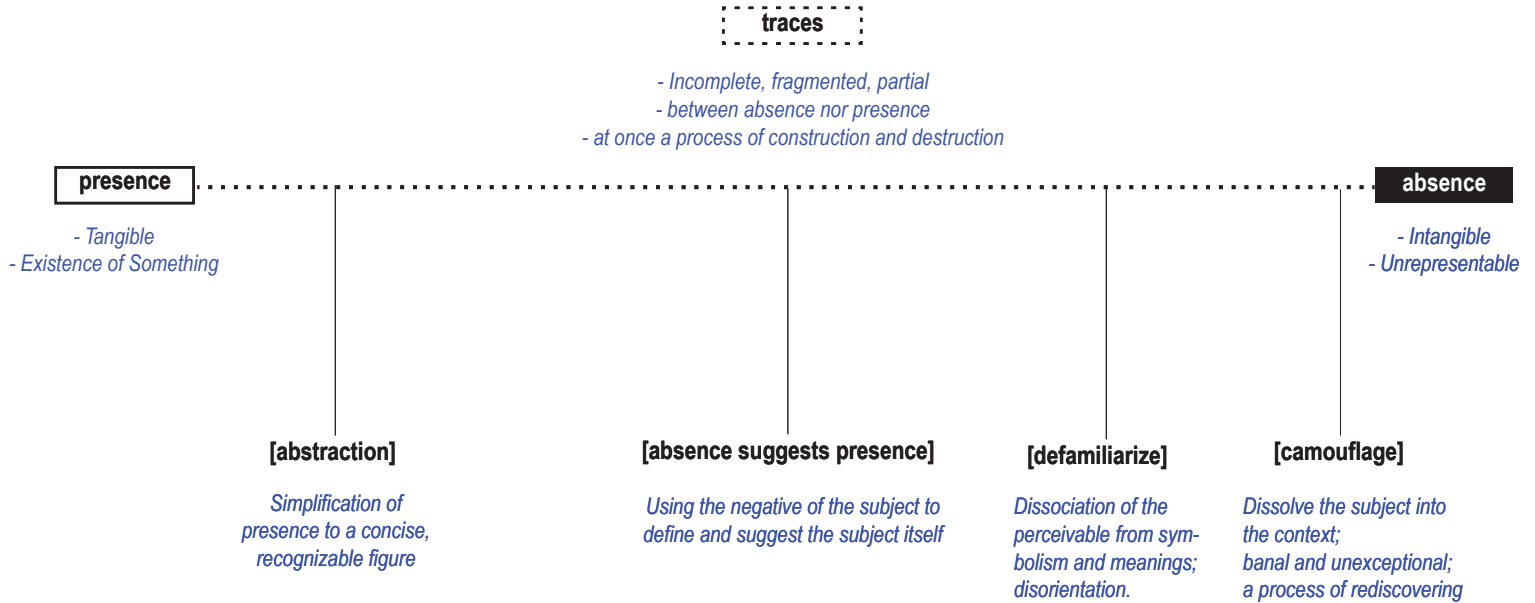
Operations of Traces

The temporary act of resisting spatial logic of the city was eventually erased by the government and time. The tangible evidence of the alternative democratic sphere was removed and forgotten. To combat such amnesia of the political past, the project dived into exploring how to turn the temporary into permanent.

The project comes to understand traces as the incomplete, fragmented and partial of the subject. It is neither the absence nor the presence; it is neither tangible nor intangible. The traces are a result of simultaneous construction and destruction. It fluctuates between the solidity of existing and vacuum of non-existing.

Through analyzing and catagorizing the following memorial objects, the project extracts possible operations on the traces, and hence ways to turn the trace of the democratic struggles into permanent progressive tools of change.

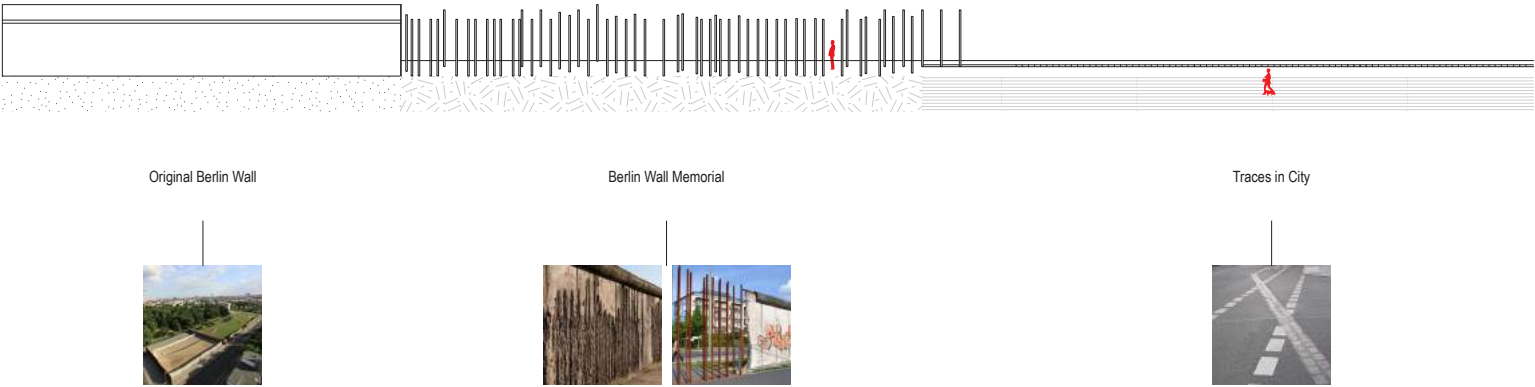
This project has distilled four operations upon the study: abstraction, absence suggests presence, defamiliarization and camouflage.



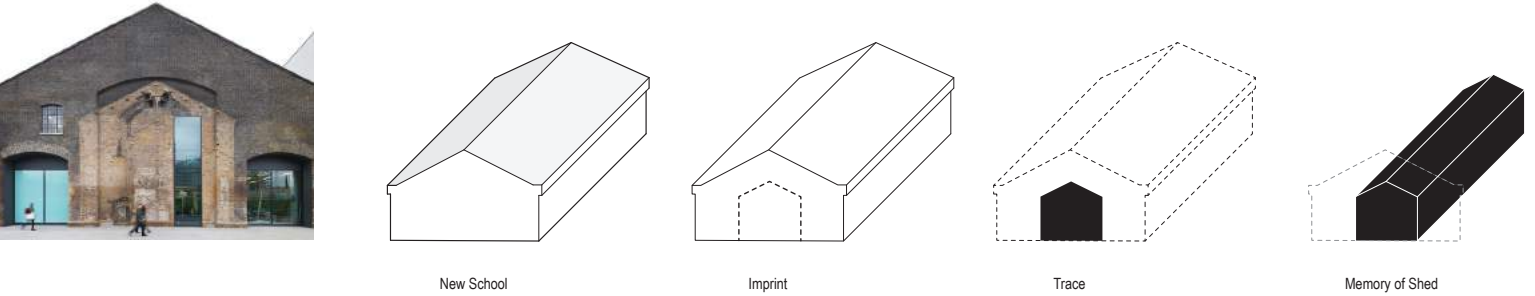
_Abstraction

Simplification of presence to a concise, recognizable figure.

Berlin Wall Memorial, Berlin



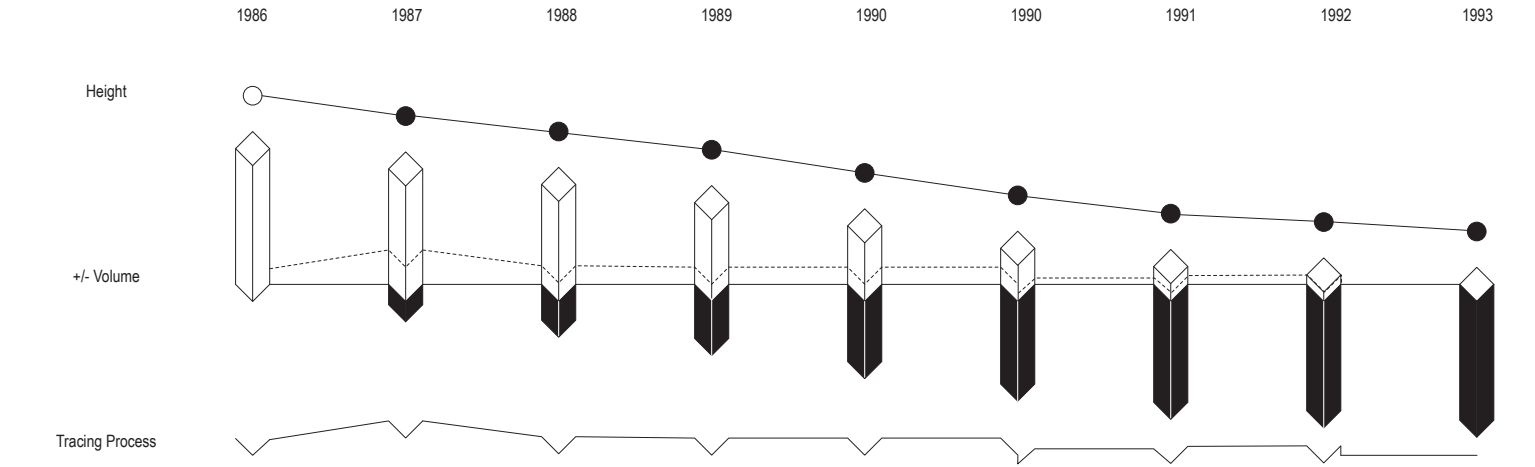
Central Saint Martin, London



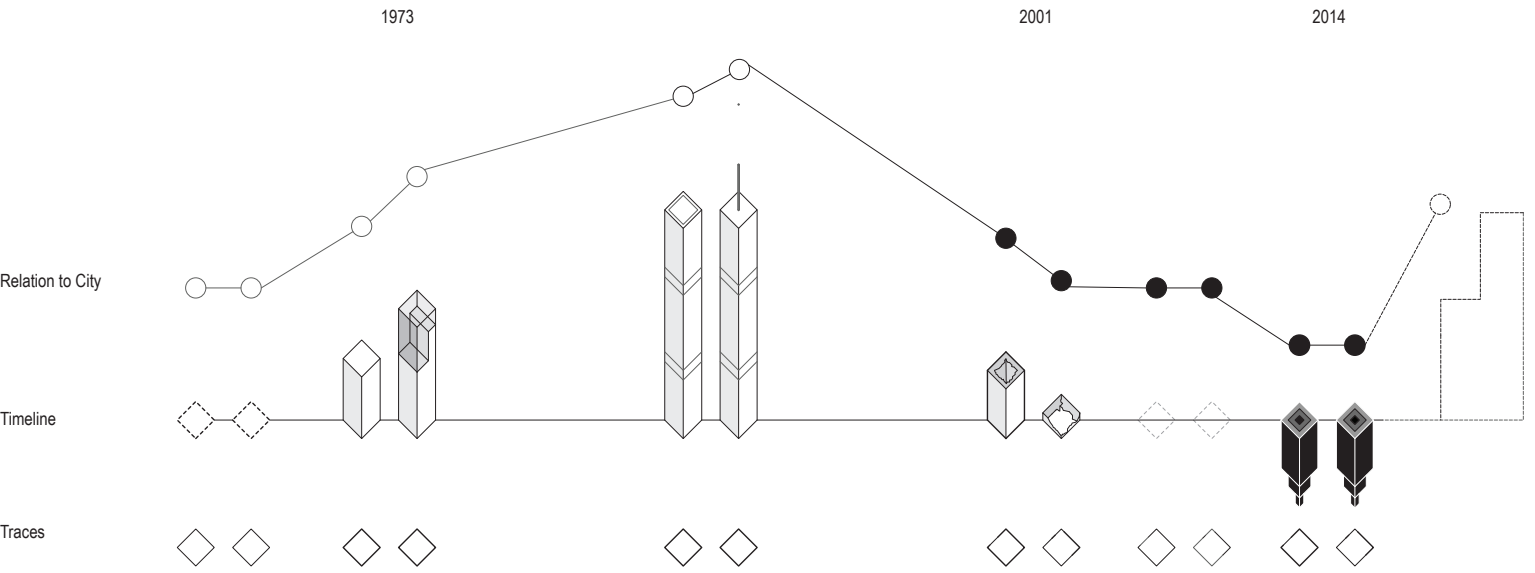
_Absence Suggests Presence

Using the negative of the subject to define and suggest the subject itself.

Monument Against Fascism, Hamburg-Harburg



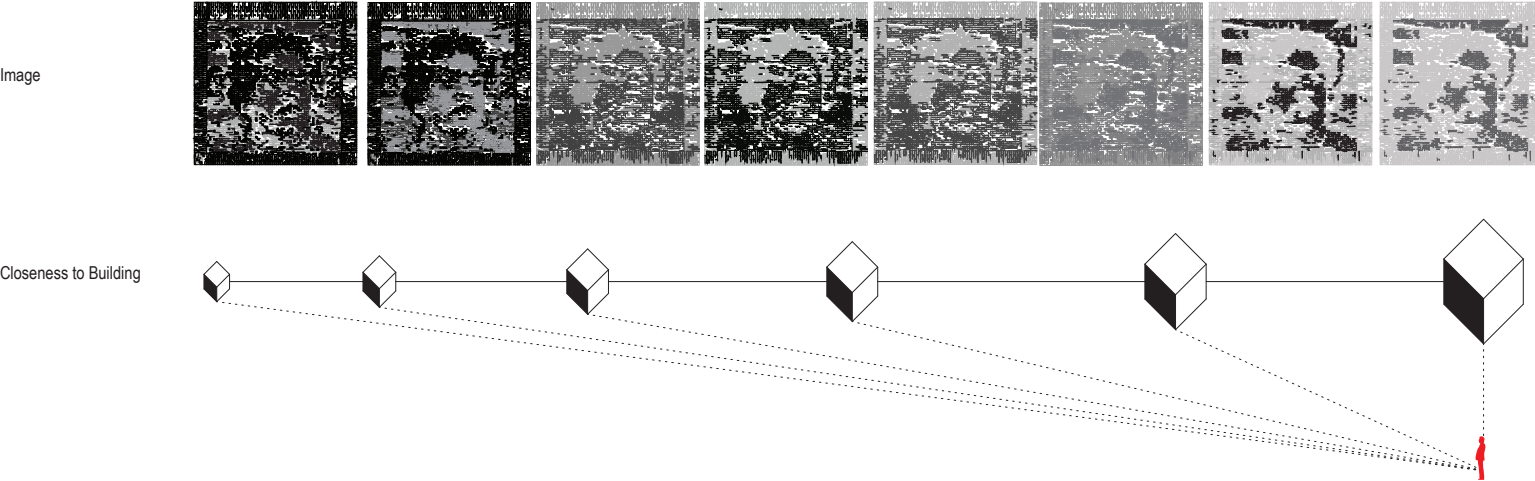
World Trade Center Memorial, New York City



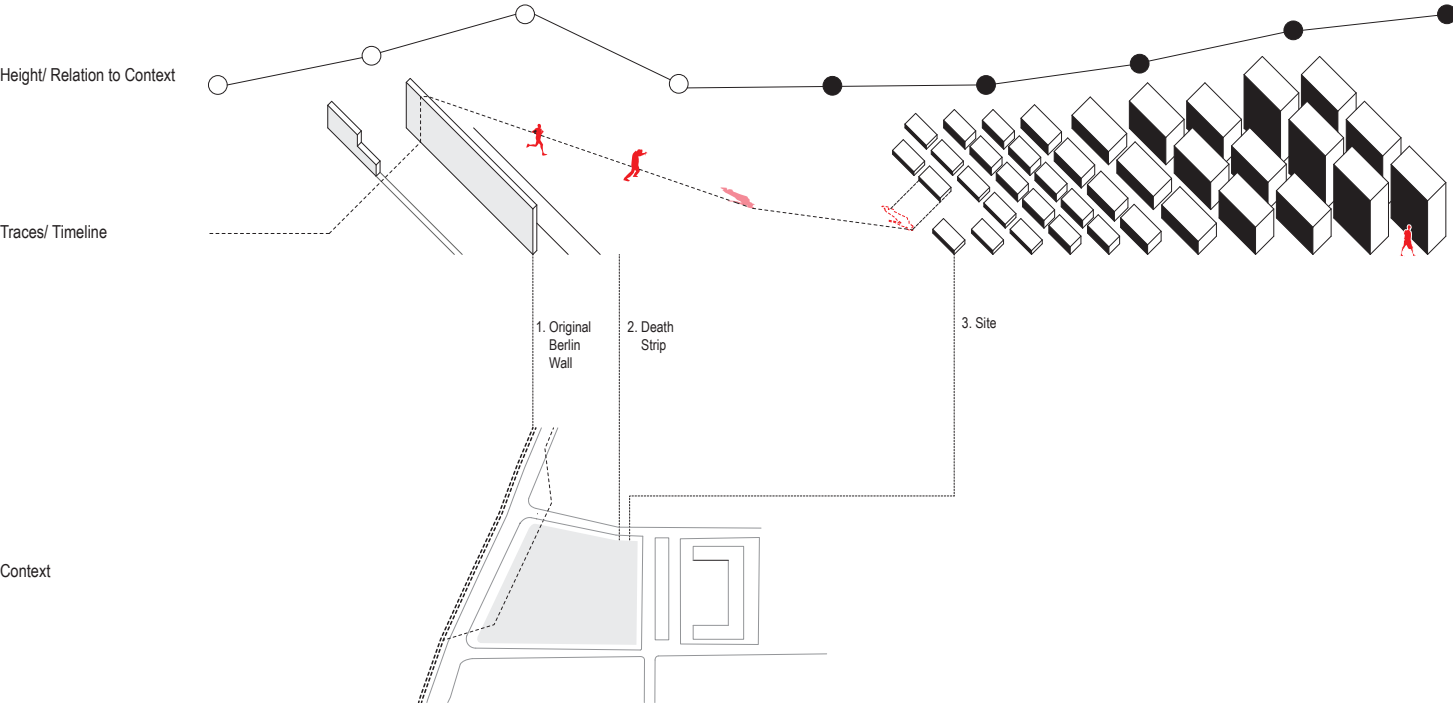
_Defamiliarize

Dissociation of the percieveable from its symbolism and meanings; disorientation

Casa della Memoria, Milan



Memorial to Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin



_Camouflage

Dissolving the subject into the context; banal and unexceptional; a process of rediscovering.

Jumping Castle War Memorial, Cockatoo Island



Shooting of Michael Brown, Ferguson, MO.



POLITICAL ARCHIPELAGO
HONG KONG
2020



4

Political Archipelago

This project proposes a political archipelago that confronts the tides of the governmental and capitalistic authority of the city. Through this continuous **making/unmaking process upon the traces of political sites**, these “islands” are the **anchor points** for future force of urban resistance to the city.



“ The islands of the archipelago, on the other hand, **confront the forces of urbanization** by opposing to urbanization’s ubiquitous power their explicitness as forms, as punctual, circumscribed facts, as stoppages”.

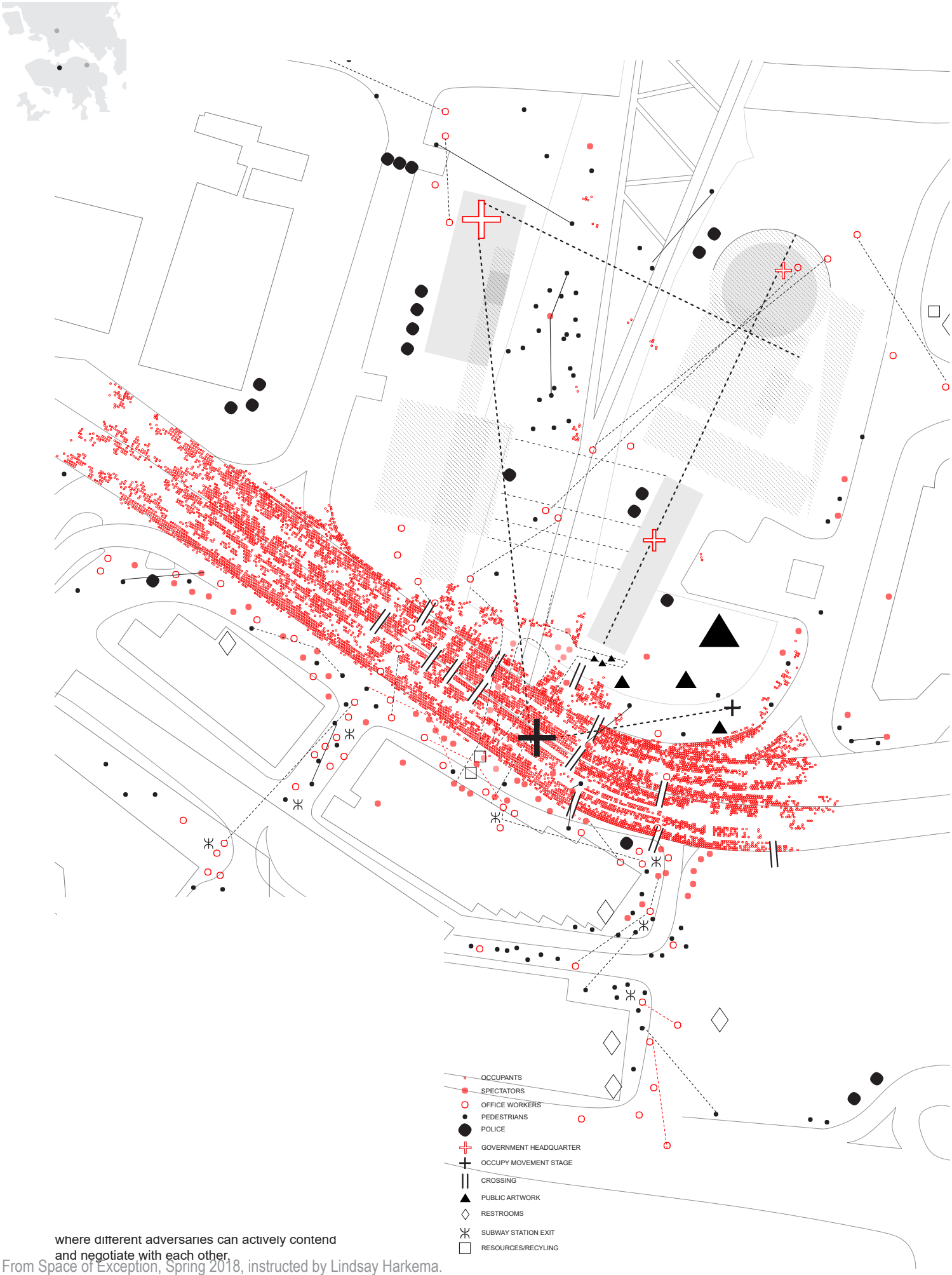
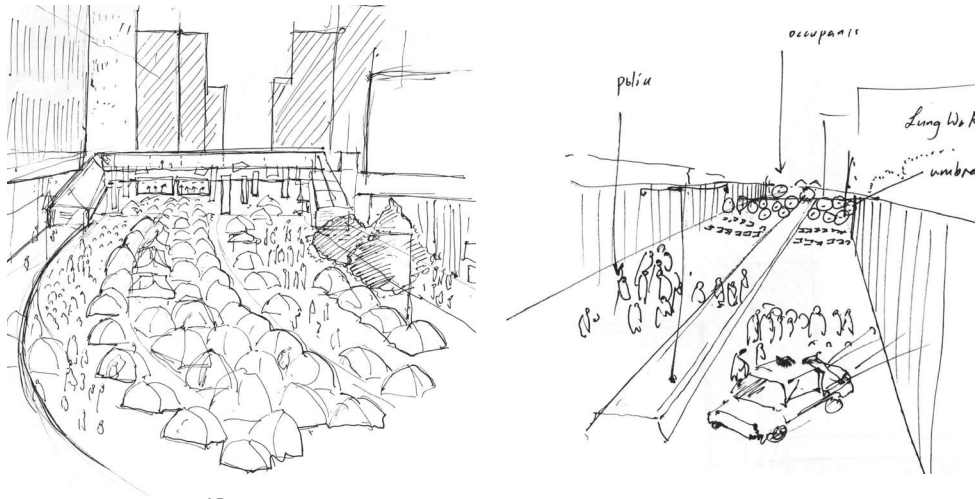
Admiralty Occupy Zone

The Admiralty Occupy Zone was the first occupied among the three major occupied zones. It was first occupied on 26 September 2014 and was cleared by 11 December 2014. The total occupied period was 77 days.

The occupied zone is the two-way main roads right outside of the Hong Kong Government headquarter in Admiralty, the central financial district in Hong Kong. The high-traffic main road was the main artery of the district and the city, and the occupied movement has forced new traffic pattern around the site. The proximity of the occupation to the headquarter is symbolically significant. It is also a sarcastic statement as the original design of the headquarter is intend to show “the door of the government is always welcome to its citizens”.

The occupation zone has the greatest area among the three occupied zone. It requires many strategic defense tactics since the site is the most opened among the three. The occupants have experimented with different barricades and roadblocks for different sections of the road.

The occupation zone also has “The Grand Stage”, a platform for organizer to announce and broadcast important messages to the occupants. This feature distinguishes the occupied zone as the more organized among the three. The surrounding commercial buildings provide amenities such as restaurants, bathrooms and water that help with sustaining the movement. The many shop owners from around the occupied sites also helped with the occupants by providing resources to them. The organized and well-maintained public art attracts many visitors in the site, and the popularity helps with spreading and sustaining the occupants.

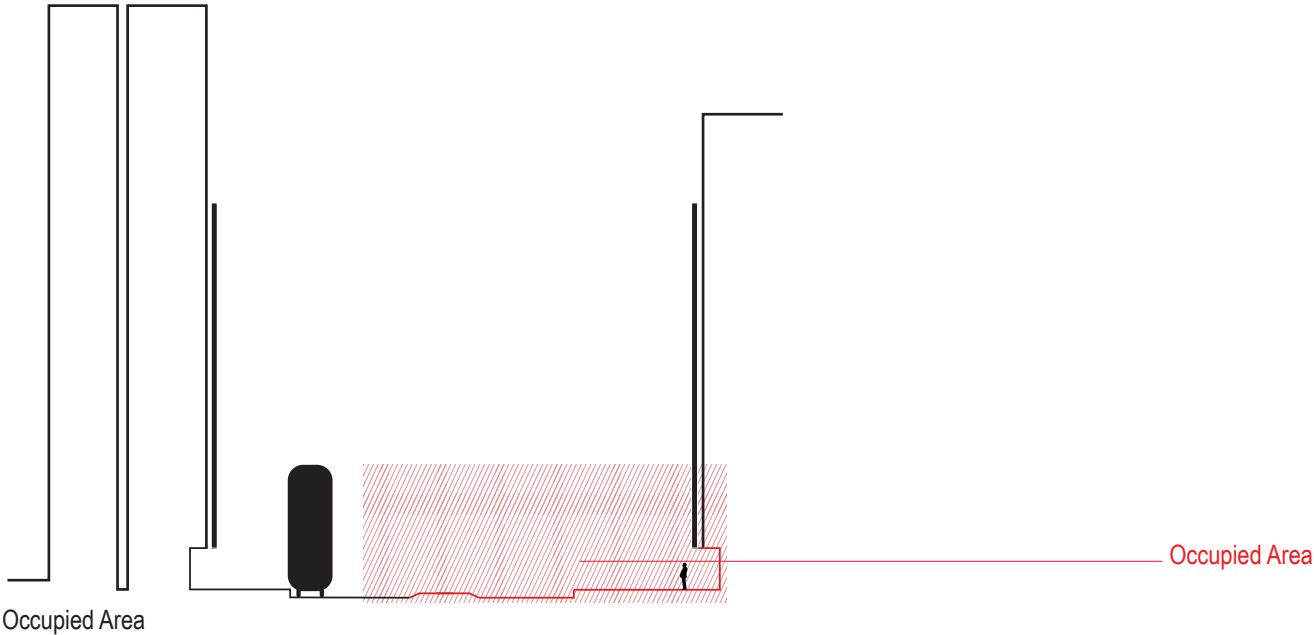
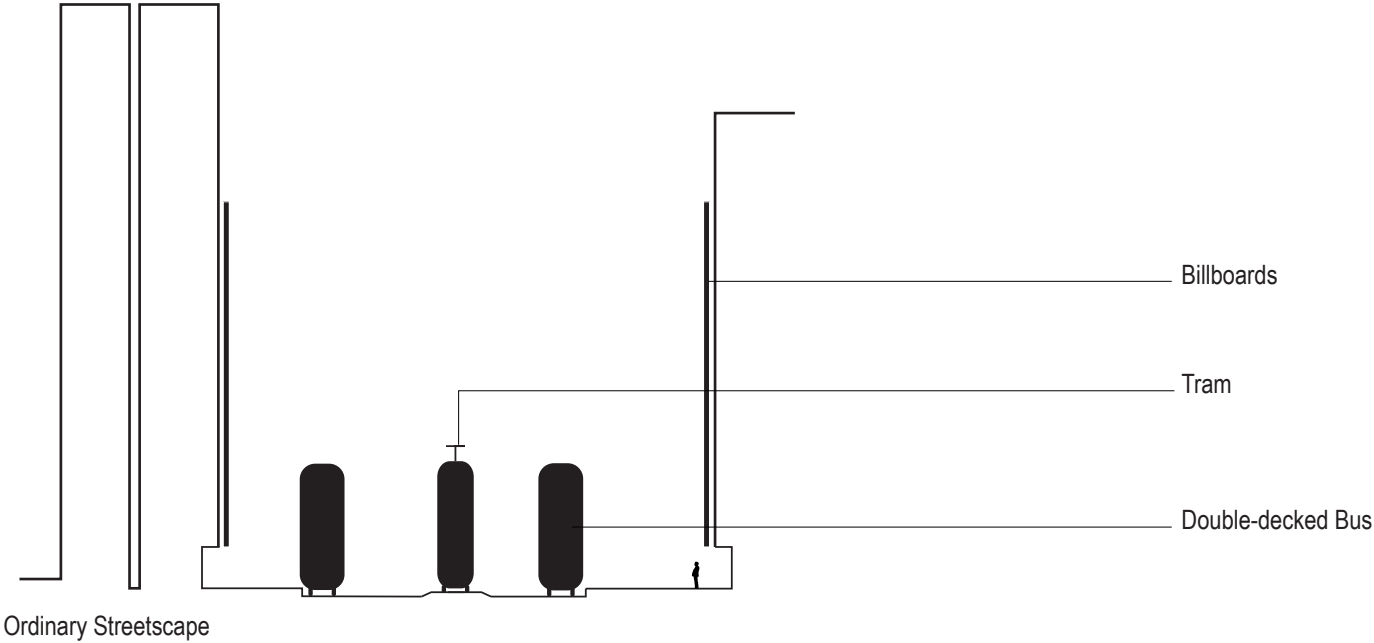
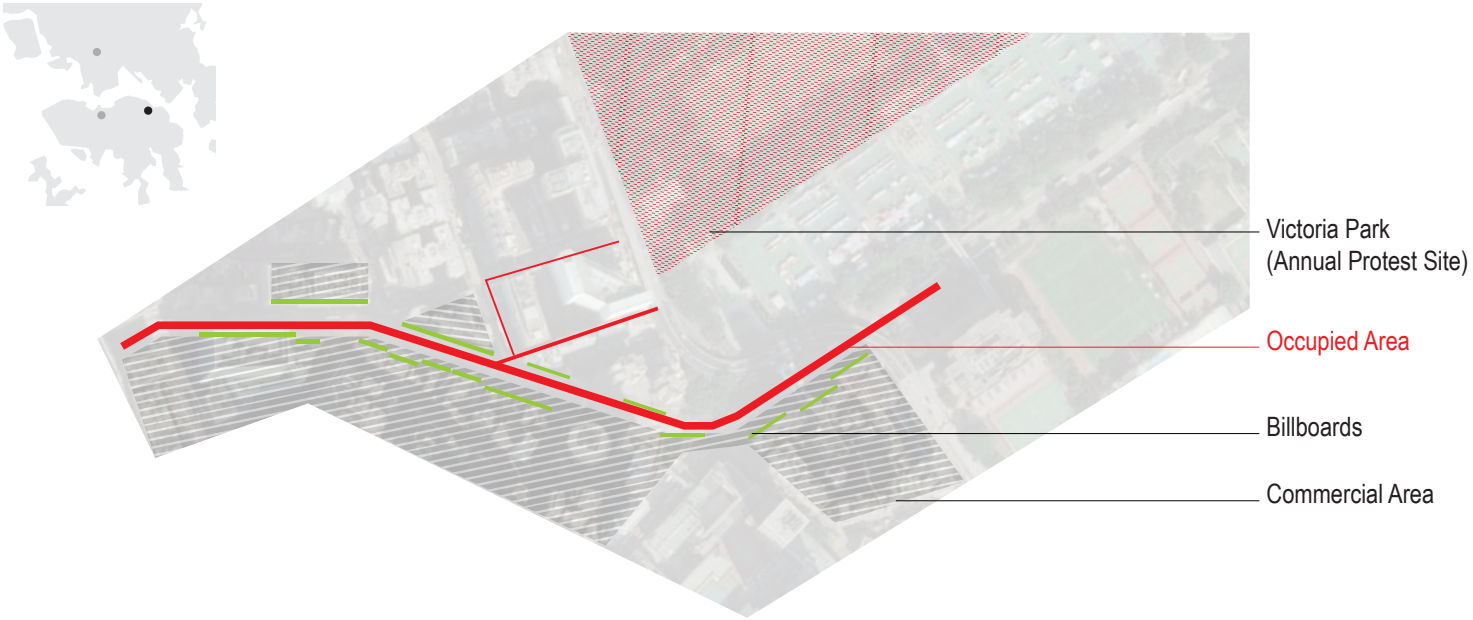
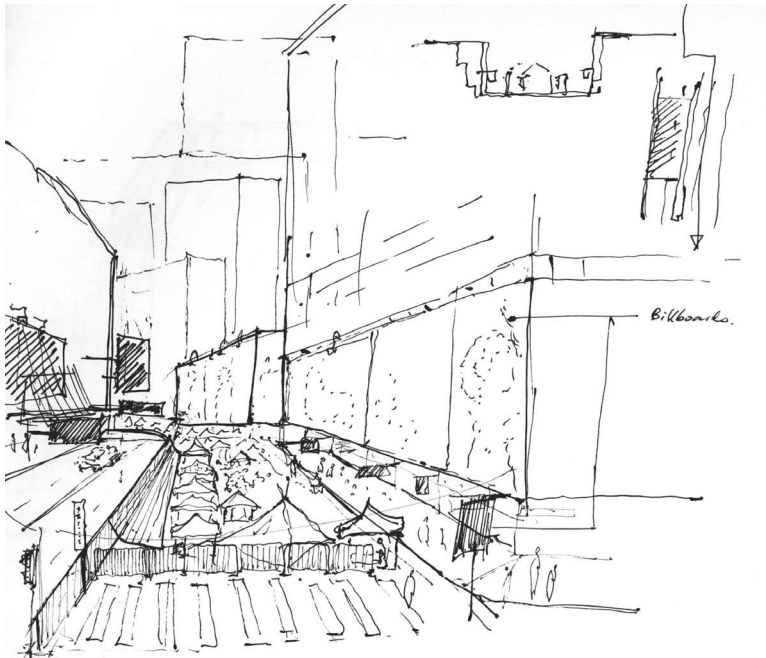


where different adversaries can actively contend
and negotiate with each other.
From Space of Exception, Spring 2018, instructed by Lindsay Harkema.

Causeway Bay Occupy Zone

The Causeway Bay Occupy Zone was occupied from 28 September to 15 September for 79 days. The occupied zone is a wide road cutting across a middle to up-scale commercial district, intersected by the tramline. The site is surrounded by more than 10-story high commercial buildings. The façade of these buildings are all covered with enormous billboards, and the buildings cantilevered over the sidewalks. The occupants occupied on one way of the main road, but they had occupied the entire road at the peak of the occupation. The site is much smaller than Admiralty.

As the main road is one of the major routes for double-decked buses, the occupation have caused some disturbance to the traffic pattern and inconvenient to the locals and shoppers. The occupy zone is closed to the subway station and therefore attracts equal numbers of spectators and participants. The nearby commercial malls again were convenient for obtaining resources for the movement.

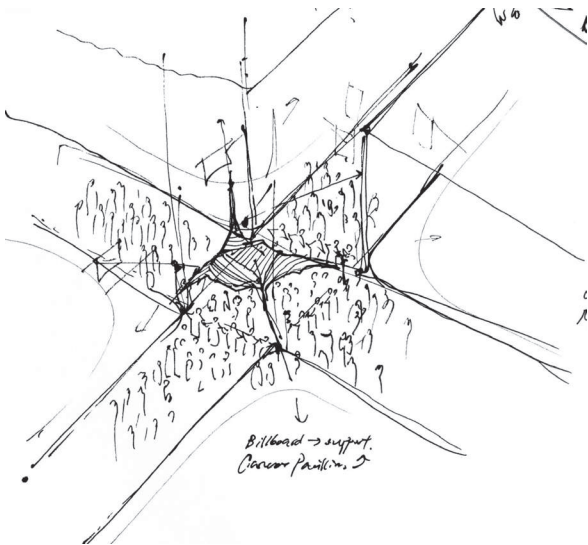


Mongkok Occupy Zone

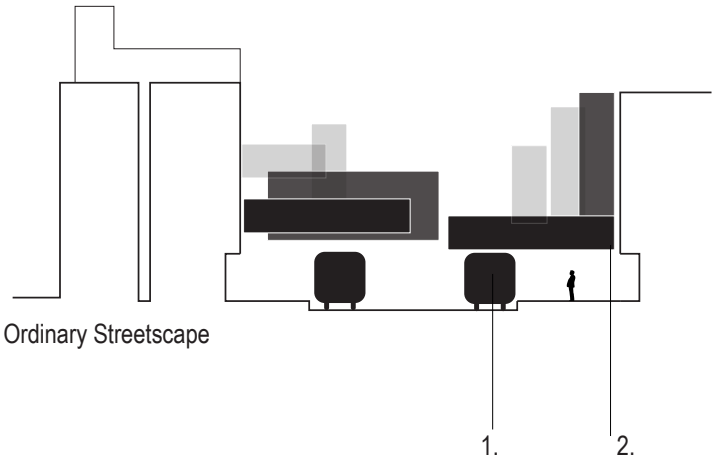
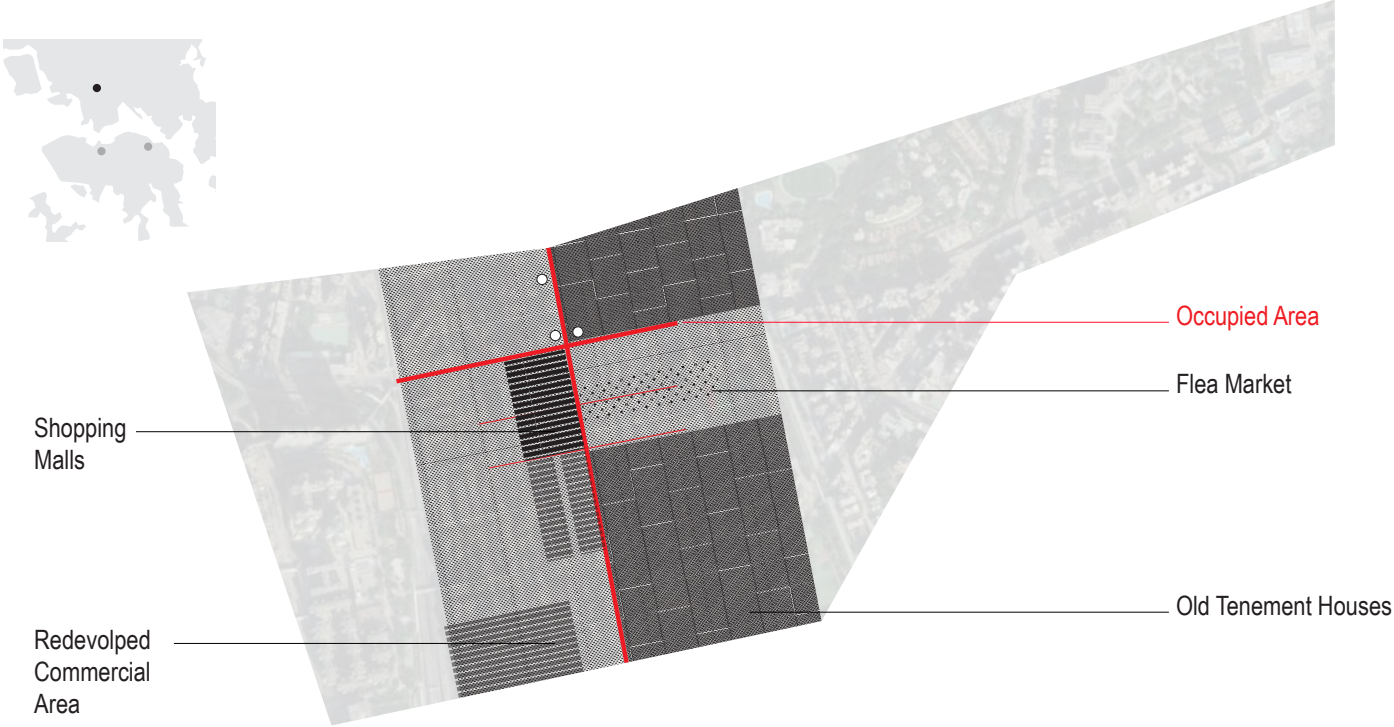
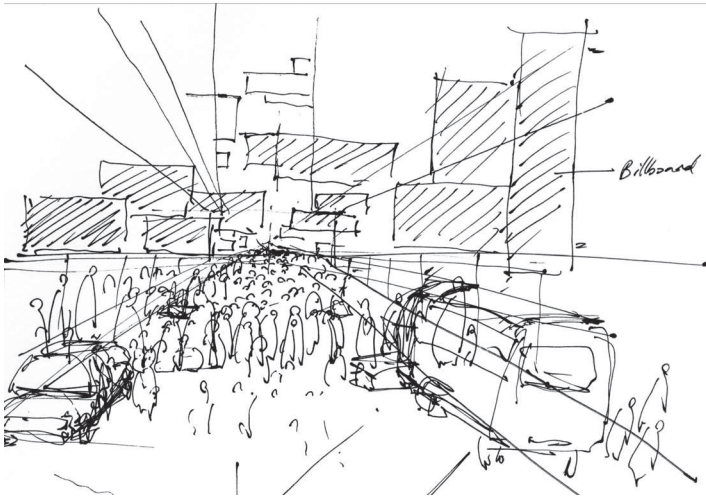
The Mongkok Occupy Zone was occupied from 28 September to 27 November for 61 days. Located across the Victoria Harbor from the other two sites, the Mongkok area was an old district with tenement housings (tanglau) intercepted by skyscraper trendy malls. For most part of the district, the ground level are shops and vendors while the upper levels are homes of the lower to middle class. The streetscape is full of overhanging neon signs and billboards with no lack of traffic. With both local flea market and high-end malls, Mongkok attracts many shoppers of all age and backgrounds. The densely populated district is also home to many middle and high schools and many nightclubs, thus the populations of the pedestrians are leaning towards teenagers and young adults.

Mongkok was also infamous of its past as gang-infested grassroots area. The many pubs and nightclubs around the area built up a thriving nightlife that has historically attracted crimes and gang culture. Many movie and literature work also framed the image of Mongkok. The gang culture, however, still exists till today.

The crowded and narrow streets of Mongkok presented new challenges to the occupants. The occupants have occupied the wider portion of the district, the Nathan Road, which is the main artery of Mongkok and other neighboring districts. It is also the occupy zone with occupants that have more attitudes than the others. There are much more notorious confrontation between the occupants and the police, and many have suspected or blamed on gang involvement.



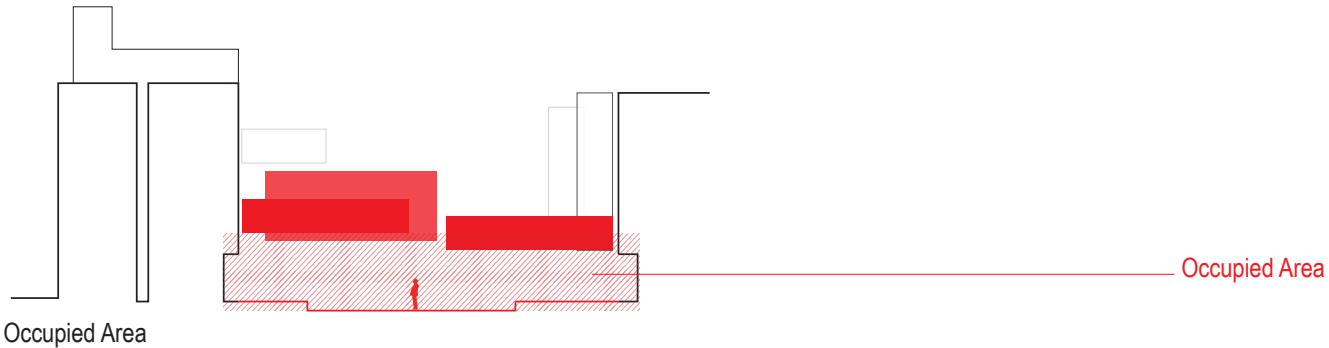
Sketches of Mongkok Occupy Zone



1. Minibus Traffic Congestion



2. Overhanging Billboards



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